The Ethics of the Negro Question Speech by Anna Julia Cooper

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Where there is no vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:16.

A nation's greatness is not dependent upon the things it makes and uses. Things without thoughts are mere vulgarities. America can boast her expanse of territory, her gilded domes, her paving stones of silver dollars; but the question of deepest moment in this nation today is its span of the circle of brotherhood, the moral stature of its men and its women, the elevation at which it receives its "vision" into the firmament of eternal truth.

I walked not long since thro the national library at Washington. I confess that my heart swelled and my soul was satisfied; for however overpowering to a subdued individual taste the loud scream of color in the grand hallway may be, one cannot but feel that the magnificence of that pile, the loftiness of sentiment and grandeur of execution here adequately and artistically express the best in American life and aspiration. I have often sat silent in the gallery under the great dome contemplating the massive pillars that support the encircling arches and musing on the texts traced above the head of each heroic figure:

Science, holding in her hand instrument for the study of Astronomy, proclaims "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." "Law bears the equal scales with the text: "Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her
voice is the harmony of the world." Religion stands with firm feet and fearless mien, unequivocally summing up the whole matter: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."

Surely if American civilization should one day have to be guessed from a few broken columns and mutilated statues like the present grandeur of Egypt, Greece and Rome, the antiquarian or the historian who shall in future ages, dig from the dust of centuries this single masterpiece, this artistic expression of a people's aspiration and achievement, will yield ready homage to the greatness of the nation which planned and executed such a monument of architectural genius. "Surely here was a Nation" thy must conclude, "whose God was the Lord! A nation whose vision was direct from the Mount of God!"

Whether such an estimate is just, it is our deepest concern to examine. Where there is no vision, the people perish. A nation cannot long survive the shattering of its own ideals. Its doom is already sounded when it begins to write one law on its walls and lives another in its halls. Weighed in the balance and found wanting was not more terribly signed and sealed for the trembling Belshazzar than for us by these handwritings on our walls if they have lost their hold on the thought and conduct of the people.

The civilizations that have flowered and failed in the past did not harvest their fruit and die of old age. A worm was eating at the core even in the heyday of their splendor and magnificence so soon as the grand truths which they professed
had ceased to vitalize and vivify their national life.

Rome's religion was pagan, it is true, but for all that it was because Rome had departed from the integrity of her own ideals and was laughing in her sleeve at the gods of her fathers that she found herself emasculated and effete before the virile hordes that plundered and finally superseded her. Thor and Woden had not become to the barbarians a figure to paint a wall or adorn a fountain. Let America beware how she writes on her walls to be seen of men the lofty sentiment "Give instruction to those who cannot procure it for themselves", while she tips a wink at those communities which propose to give for instruction to the poor only that which is wrung from their penury. The vision as pictured on our walls is divine. The American ideal is perfect. A weak or undeveloped race apparently might ask no better fate than the opportunity of maturing under the great wing of this nation and of becoming christianized under its spiritual ministrations.

It is no fault of the Negro that he stands in the United States of America today as the passive and silent rebuke to the Nation's Christianity, the great gulf between its professions and its practices, furnishing the chief ethical element in its politics, constantly pointing with dumb but inexorable fingers to those ideals of our civilization which embody the Nation's highest, truest, and best that, its noblest and grandest purposes and aspirations.

Amid all the deafening and maddening clamor of expediency and availability among politicians and parties, from tariffs
and trusts to free coinage and 16 to 1, from microscopic questions of local sovereignty to the telescopic ones of expansion and imperialism, the Negro question furnishes the one issue that says ought. Not what will the party gain by this measure or that, not will this or that experiment bring in larger percentages and cash balances; but who, where, what is my neighbor? Am I my brother's keeper? Are there any limitations or special adaptations of the Golden Rule? If Jesus were among men today, is there a type of manhood veiled wherein, the Divinity whom our civilization calls Captain, would again, coming to His own, be again despised, rejected, because of narrow prejudices and blinding pride of race?

Uprooted from the sunny land of his forefathers by the white man's cupidity and selfishness, ruthlessly torn from all the ties of clan and tribe, dragged against his will over thousands of miles of unknown waters to a strange land among strange peoples, the Negro was transplanted to this continent in order to produce chattels and beasts of burden for a nation "conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

A nation worshipping as God one who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister; a nation believing in a Savior meek and lowly of heart who, having not where to lay His head, was eyes to the blind, hearing to the deaf, a gospel of hope and joy to the poor and outcast, a friend to all who travail and are heavy laden.

The whites of America revolted against the mother country
for a trifling tax on tea, because they were not represented in
the body that laid the tax. They drew up their Declaration of
Independence, a Magna Carta of human rights, embodying principles
of universal justice and equality.

Professing a religion of sublime altruism, a political faith
in the inalienable rights of man as man, these jugglers with
reason and conscience were at the same moment stealing heathen
from their far away homes, forcing them with lash and gun to
unrequited toil, making it a penal offense to teach them to read
the Word of God, — nay, more, were even begetting and breeding
mongrels of their own flesh among these helpless creatures and
pocketing the guilty increase, the price of their own blood in
 unholy dollars and cents. Accursed hunger for gold!

To what dost thou not drive mortal breasts! But God did
not ordain this nation to reenact the tragedy of Midas and trans­
mute its very hearts core into yellow gold. America has a
conscience as well as a pocket-book, and it comes like a pledge
of perpetuity to the nation that she has never yet lost the seed
of the prophets, men of inner light and unfaltering courage, who
would cry aloud and spare not, against the sin of the nation.
The best brain and heart of this country have always rung true
and it is our hope today that the petrifying spirit of commer­
cialism which grows so impatient at the Negro question or any
other question calculated to weaken the money getting nerve by
pulling at the heart and the conscience may still find a worthy
protagonist in the reawakened ethical sense of the nation which
can take no step backward and which must eventually settle, and
settle right this and every question involving the nation's honor
and integrity.

It gives me great pleasure to record the historian's testimony to the clear vision and courageous action of the Society of Friends who persisted in keeping alive this ethical sense in some dark days of the past.

"The Quakers have the honor" says Von Holtz of having begun the agitation of the Slavery Question from the moral standpoint earliest and most radically. Thanks to the fiery zeal of some members of this Society, the religious and moral instruction of the slaves and the struggle against any further importation of the Negroes were begun by the close of the 17th Century. By the middle of the 18th Century the emancipation of slaves had gradually become a matter of action by the whole Quaker body. By a resolution of 1774 all members concerned in importing, selling, purchasing, giving or transferring Negroes or other slaves were directed to be excluded from membership or disowned. Two years later this resolution was extended to cover cases of those who delayed to set their slaves free. In February 1790 the Quaker meeting in Philadelphia and the Quakers in New York sent addresses to Congress requesting it to abolish the African slave trade. Certain representatives from the North urged that the petitions of so respectable a body as that of the Quakers in relation to so great a moral evil, were deserving of special consideration. The representatives of the South replied with provoking irony and mercilessly castigated the Quakers. Year after year the Friends came indefatigably with new petitions each time, and each time had to undergo the same scornful treatment. In 1797 the yearly meeting
at Philadelphia set forth some special wrongs in a petition, a prominent place in which was occupied by a complaint against the law of North Carolina condemning freed slaves to be sold again. Many Southern delegates in Congress expressed in a bullying fashion their scorn for the tenacity with which these men of earnest faith ever constantly came back again and again to their fruitless struggle. Not in America alone, England also witnessed the faith and works of this body of consistent Christians of unimpaired vision and unwavering determination. The first petition to the House of Commons for the abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery went up from the Friends, and through the long agitation which ensued before that prayer was granted, the Society of Friends took an active and prominent part. Their own dear Whittier has sounded the keynote both of their struggle and its reward:

"Whatever in love's name is truly done
To free the bound and lift the fallen one
Is done to Christ."

And the Master Himself: Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto Me.

The colored people of America find themselves today in the most trying period of all their trying history in this land of their trial and bondage. As the trials and responsibilities of the man weigh more heavily than do those of the infant, so the Negro under free labor and cut throat competition today has to vindicate his fitness to survive in face of a colorphobia that needs neither reason nor religion and a prejudice that shows no quarter and allows no mitigating circumstances.
In the darkest days of slavery, there were always at the
North friends of the oppressed and devoted champions of freedom
who would go all length^ to wipe out the accursed stain of human
slavery from their country's scutcheon; while in the South the
slave's close contact with the master class, mothering them in
infancy, caring for them in sickness, sorrow and death, resulted
as pulsing touch of humanity must ever result, in many warm
sympathies and a total destruction of that repulsion to mere
color which betokens narrow and exclusive intercourse among pro-
vincials.

Today all this is changed. White and black meet as strangers
with cold, distant or avowed hostility. The colored domestic who
is no longer specially trained for her job or taught to look on
it with dignity and appreciation, is barely tolerated in the home
till she can do up the supper dishes and get away. - when she can
go - to the devil if he will have her. The mistress who bemoans
her shiftlessness and untidiness does not think of offering her
a comfortable room, providing for her social needs and teaching
her in the long evenings at home the simple household arts and
virtues which our grandmothers found time for. Her vices are
set down to the debit account of her freedom, especially if she
has attended a public school and learned enough to spell her
way thro a street ballad. So generally is this the case that
if a reform were attempted suddenly, the girl herself of the
average type would misunderstand and probably resent it. The
condition of the male laborer is even more hopeless. Receiving
50 cents a day or less for unskilled but laborious toil from
which wage he boards himself and is expected to keep a family.

in something better than a "one room cabin", the Negro workman receives neither sympathy nor recognition from his white fellow laborers. Scandinavians, Poles and Hungarians can tie up the entire country by a strike paralyzing not only industry but existence itself, when they are already getting a wage that sounds like affluence to the hungry black man. The union means war to the death against him and the worst of it is he can never be lost in the crowd and have his opprobrium forgotten. A foreigner can learn the language and out-American the American on his own soil. A white man can apply burnt cork and impute his meanness to the colored race as his appointed scape goat. But the Ethiopian cannot change his skin. On him is laid the iniquity of his whole race and his character is prejudged by formula. Even charity does not study his needs as an individual person but the good that love has planned for him must be labeled and basketed "special" for the Negro. Special kinds of education, special forms of industry, special churches and special places of amusement, special sections of our cities during life and special burying grounds in death. White America has created a terra incognita in its midst, a strange dark unexplored waste of human souls from which if one essay to speak out an intelligible utterance, so well known is the place of preferment accorded the mirroring of preconceived notions, that instead of being the revelation of a personality and the voice of a truth, the speaker becomes a phonograph and merely talks back what is talked into him.
It is no popular task today to voice the black man's woe. It is far easier and safer to say that the wrong is all in him. The American conscience would like a rest from the black man's ghost. It was always an unpalatable subject but preeminently now is the era of good feeling, and self complacency, of commercial omnipotence and military glorification. It seems an impertinence as did the boldness of Nathan when he caught the conscience of the great king at the pinnacle of victorious prosperity with the inglorious seizure of the ewe lamb from a man of no importance. Has not the nation done and suffered enough for the Negro? Is he worth the blood and treasure that have been spilled on his account, the heart ache and bitterness that have racked the country in easing him off its shoulders and out of its conscience. Let us have no more of it. If he is a man let him stand up and prove it. Above all let us have peace. Northern capital is newly wed to Southern industry and the honeymoon must not be disturbed. If southern conventions are ingenious enough to invent a device for disfranchising these unwelcome children of the soil, if it will work, what of it?

On the floor of the most august body in the land, a South Carolina senator said: Yes; we bullied and terrorized niggers and we are not ashamed of it. If you had been in our place you would have done the same.

During the slavery agitation Garrison was mobbed in the streets of Boston for advocating abolition; but he kept right on and would be heard. In our day the simplest narrative in just recognition of the Negro meets with cold disfavor and the
narrator is generally frozen into silence. A lecturer on the Spanish War attempted as an eye witness and with the aid of Stereopticon to tell a Richmond Audience of the gallant charge up San Juan Hill and the brave part in it by the 10th Cavalry. His words were met by hisses, his lantern slides destroyed and he was obliged to close his entertainment in darkness and confusion.

A professor in a Southern school who in a magazine article condemned the saturnalia of blood and savagery known as lynching arguing that the Negro while inferior, was yet a man and should be accorded the fundamental rights of a man, lost his position for his frankness and fairness. The Negro is being ground to powder between the upper and the nether-millstones. The South, intolerant of interference from either outside or inside, the North too polite or too busy or too gleeful over the promised handshaking to manifest the most distant concern.

But God is not dead neither doth the ruler of the universe slumber and sleep. As a Nation sows so shall it reap. Men do not gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles. To sow the wind is to reap the whirlwind.

A little over two years ago while the gentlest and kindest of presidents was making a tour of the South bent only on good will to men with a better understanding and the healing of all sectional rancor and ill felling, there occurred in almost a stone's throw of where he was for the time being domiciled an outburst of diabolism that would shame a tribe of naked savages. A black wretch was to be burned alive. Without court or jury his unshrived soul was to be ushered into eternity and the pro
pect furnished a holiday festival for the country side.

Excursion trains with banners flying were run into the place and eager children were heard to exclaim: We have seen a hanging, we are now going to see a burning!

Human creatures with the behavior of hyenas contended with one another for choice bones of their victim as souvenirs of the occasion. So wanton was the cannibalistic thirst for blood that the Negro preacher who offered the last solace of the Christian to the doomed man was caught in the same mad frenzy and made to share his fate. A shiver ran through the nation at such demoniacal lawlessness. But a cool analysis of the situation elicited from the Attorney General of the United States the legal opinion that the case "probably had no Federal aspects!"

Just one year ago the same gentle people loving president was again acting out his instinct of mingling naturally and democratically with his people. Again lawlessness, this time in the form of a single red handed unreasoning ruffian instead of many but the same mad spirit which puts its own will whether swayed by lurid passion or smoldering hate, on the throne of the majesty of law and of duty, made the nation shudder and bleed by striking down unaccused and untried the great head of the nation. A fact may be mentioned here, which was unquestioned at the time by those around, but which was not often repeated afterwards, that it was the burly arm of a Negro that felled the assassin and dealt the first blows in defense of the stricken president.

I will not here undertake an apology for the shortcomings of the American Negro. It goes without saying that the black is
centuries behind the white race in material, mental and moral development. The American Negro is today but 37 years removed from chattledom, not long enough surely to ripen the century plant of a civilization. After 250 years of a most degrading slavery, inured to toil but not to thrift, without home, without family ties, without those habits of self reliant industry by which peoples maintain their struggle for existence, poor, naked, weak, ignorant, degraded even below his pristine state as a savage, the American Negro was at the close of the War of the Rebellion "cut loose" as the slang of the day expressed it, and left to fend for himself. The master class, full of resentment and rage at the humiliations and losses of a grinding war, suffered their old time interest to turn into bitterness or cold indifference and KuKlux beatings with re-enslaving black codes became the sorry substitute for the overseer's lash and the auction block.

At this juncture the conscience of the Nation asserted itself and the federal constitution was so amended as to bring under the aegis of national protection these helpless babes whom the exigences of war had suddenly thrown into the malstrom of remorseless life. That they are learning to stem the current there is ground for hope; that they have already made encouraging headway even enemies cannot deny. The Negro's productivity as a free laborer is conceded to be greater than formerly as a slave, and the general productivity of the South were he constitutes the chief labor element, has since his emancipation more than doubled. Not having
inherited the "business bump" his acquisitive principles have been received some shocks and many times have paralyzed and stunted by the insecurity of his property and the disregard of his rights shown by his powerful white neighbors. Such was the case in the collapse of the Freedman's Savings Bank and the recent Wilmington massacre when the accumulations of a lifetime were wantonly swept away and home loving, lawabiding citizens were forced into exile, their homes and little savings appropriated by others. In spite of this, however, some headway is making in material wealth and the tax lists in former slave states show a credit of several millions to the descendants of the enslaved.

But all his advancement in wealth and education counts for naught, and ought to count for naught, if it be true, as commonly reported in certain quarters, that the Negro is a moral leper and that sexually he is a dangerous animal in any community. It is said that those astounding exhibitions of fury and force which dizzy the head and sicken the heart of civilized people, are necessary to cower his brutish passions and guard the Holy Grail of Saxon civilization. That the sanctity of pure homes, the inviolability of helpless womanhood must be protected at any cost and that nothing short of devastation and war will suffice. That the beast must be kept under a reign of terror to make him know his place and keep his distance. The iteration and reiteration of sharp and swift retribution for the 'usual' crime is kept up altho the 'crime' has been again and again proved to be unusual by more than 90 per cent and statistics of lynchings and their causes have been published from year to year showing every cause for a black man's being lynched from "Being impudent to a white man to Preach-
ing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a doomed convict, and yet we are
told that these things have "probably no Federal aspects." Don't you
think we would find a way to give them Federal Aspects if it were
poor old Spain lynching her obstreperous islanders?

Says Prof. Shaler of Harvard:

"When we recall the fact that there are now some five million
Negro men in the South and that not one in ten thousand is guilty
of crime against womanhood, we see how imperfect is the basis of
this judgment. We have also to remember, he continues, that this
offense when committed by a Negro is thro action of the mob widely
publicised while if the offender be a white man it is unlikely to
be so well known. I therefore hold to the belief that violence to
women is not proved to be a crime common among the blacks. I am
inclined to believe that on the whole there is less danger to be
apprended from them in this regard than from an equal body of
whites of like social grade."

Such is the calm testimony of an expert sociologist who
speaks after scientific "investigation and careful analysis,

Is it credible that this race which has under freedom caught
so eagerly on the rungs of progress in other respects has so shock-
ingly deteriorated in this all important particular as to reverse
all claims to humane consideration which they had won by patient
service during long years of slavery?

Have a race of men to whom masters not over kind were not
afraid to entrust their helpless women and children while faring
forth to rivet the fetters more firmly on their dumb driven bodies
and who without one single exception demonstrated remarkable
fidelity, trustworthiness, reverence for women and kindness toward
children, suddenly become such monsters of lust and vindictiveness that a woman is not safe on the same highway with them?

A noble army of Christian workers and helpers have gone to the South ever since the War, have lived with these people on terms of Christian sympathy and perfect social equality. Have you ever heard of one of these pure minded missionaries who was insulted or outraged and her delicate sensibilities shocked by the unconquerable instincts and baser passions of the men they came to help?

You ask what is the need of today.

How can the Negro be best helped? What can be done by the man who loves his fellowmen and needs not to be convinced of duties but only to be assured of methods? What is the best means of the Negro's uplift and amelioration?

In a word I answer: Christian Education. This is nothing new you say. That experiment has been tried and tried and there are even those whose faith in the efficacy of this expedient is beginning to wane and we are looking around to see if there be some other, some quicker and surer way of doing the job. Is it not a mistake to suppose that the same old human laws apply to these people? Is there not after all something within that dark skin not yet dreamt of in our philosophy? Can we seriously take the Negro as a man "endowed by his Creator with certain unalienable rights such as Life, Liberty, Pursuit of Happiness and the right to grow up, to develop, to reason and to live his life. In short can we hope to apply the key that unlocks all other hearts and by a little human sympathy and putting ourselves in his place learn
to understand him and let him understand us? Assuredly, yes!

The black man is not a saint, neither can he be reduced to an algebraic formula. His thirty of forty checkered years of freedom have not en masse transfigured ten million slaves into experienced, thrifty, provident, law abiding members of society. There are some criminal, some shiftless, some provokingly intractable and seemingly uneducable classes and individuals among blacks as there are still unless I am misinformed, also among whites. But our philosophy does not balk at this nor do we lose our belief in the efficacy of Christian teaching and preaching. Turn on the light! Light, more light! There will always be some who do not live up to the light they have. But the Master has left us no alternative. Ye are the light of the world.

We cannot draw lines where He recognized none. We cannot falter so long as there is a human soul in need of the light. We owe it, and owe it independently of the worthiness or unworthiness of that soul. Does any one question that Jesus' vision would have pierced to the heart and marrow of our national problem and what would be His teaching in America today as to who is my neighbor?

For after all the Negro Question in America today is the white man's problem -- Nay it is humanity's problem. The past, in which the Negro was mostly passive, the white man active, has ordained that they shall be neighbors, permanently and unavoidably. To colonize or repatriate the blacks on African soil or in any other continent is physically impossible even if it were generally
desired, and no sane man talks of deportation now except as an exploded chimera. For weal or for woe the lots of these two are united, indissolubly, eternally. People on both sides are convinced that each race needs the other.

The Negro is the most stable and reliable factor today in American industry. Patient and docile as a laborer, conservative, law abiding, totally ignorant of the anarchistic, socialistic radicalism and nihilism of other lands, the American Negro is capable of contributing not only of his brawn and sinew but also from brain and character a much needed element in American civilization, and here is his home. The only home he has ever known. His blood has mingled with the bluest and the truest on every battle field that checkers his country's history. His sweat and his toil have, more than any other's, felled its forests, drained its swamps, plowed its fields and opened up its highways and waterways.

From the beginning was he here, a strong, staunch and not unwilling worker and helper. His traditions, his joys, his sorrows are all here. He has imbibed the genius and spirit of its institutions, growing with their growth, gathering hope and strength with their strength and depth. Alien neither in language, religion nor customs, the educated colored American is today the most characteristic growth of the American soil, its only genuinely indigenous development. He is the most American of Americans for he alone has no other civilization than what America has to offer. Its foibles are his foibles. Its youthful weaknesses and pompous self-confidence are all found here imitated or originating, as
between sitter and portrait. Here in the warp and woof of his character are photographed and writ large even the grotesque caricatures, the superficial absurdities and social excrescencies of "Get-rich-quick" and "Pikes Peak-or-bust" America. Nor is it too much to hope that America's finer possibilities and promise also prefigure his ultimate struggle and achievement in evolving his civilization. As the character of Uncle Tom is rated the most unique in American literature, so the plantation melodies and corn songs form the most original contribution to its music. Homogeneous or not, the national web is incomplete without the African thread that glints and ripples thro it from the beginning.

In a description of the Rough Riders' charge on the Block House at El Caney a recent columnist has thus to say: "Over against the scene of the Rough Riders set the picture of the 10th U. S. Cavalry - the famous colored regiment side by side with Roosevelt's men they fought - these black men. Scarce used to freedom themselves they are dying that Cuba may be free. Their marksmanship was magnificent, their courage was superb. They bore themselves like veterans and gave proof positive that from natures congenitally peaceful, carefree and playful, military discipline and an inspiring cause can make soldiers worthy to rank with Caesar's legions or Cromwell's Army.

Mr. Bryce in his study of the American Commonwealth says: "The South is confronted by a peculiar and menacing problem in the presence of a mass of Negroes larger than was the whole population of the union in 1800, persons who tho they are legally and
industrially members of the nation are still virtually an alien element, unabsorbed and unabsorbable."

A similar judgment was passed by the gifted author of the Bonnie Briar Bush in his "Impressions of America" who thought that the Negroes were like the Chinese in constituting the sole exception to an otherwise homogeneous population. This misapprehension is common. The explanation obvious. Social cleavage in America is strictly along the lines of color only. Jim Crow cars are not for the unwashed of all races, not for the drunken rowdy and the degraded, ignorant, vicious rabble, - not even for the pauper classes who cannot pay for superior comforts in traveling. Quite simply the only question is "What is the tinge of pigment in your epidermal cells, or in the epidermis of your mother's grandmother? The colored man or woman of culture and refinement is shoved into the same box with the filthy and the degraded no matter what his ability to pay for and his desire to secure better accommodations. He cannot eat a sandwich in one of the "white" hotels nor set down his luggage in one of their waiting rooms at a railway station. The result is that students of American society like Bryce and Ian McClaren never see or suspect the existence of intelligent aspiring thinking men and women of color in the midst of this social system. Men and women who are pondering its adjustment chafing it may be under its rude and crude incongruities and gathering strength no doubt to snap asunder one of these days its tissue beltings and couplings.

The American traveler sees and can account for only the black porter and colored boot black, the waiter and barber and scullion.
And these only as automatons in a passing show. He cannot know
them as human beings capable of human emotions, human aspirations,
human suffering, defeats and triumphs. Our traveler is then
introduced by design to the criminal records wherein the Negro,
because the poorest, weakest, least shielded class in the community
figures, of course, at his full strength. Taken for a drive thro
what would in New York or Philadelphia constitute a slum appealing
only to the Christ spirit in good men to send out their light and
their love, to start a mission to provide wholesome living con-
ditions for healthy living and clean thinking. But here both the
Priest and the Levite pass by on the other side. The missions are
to seek and to save the lost who are already fortunate enough to
be born white.

Come unto me all ye whites who are heavy laden. The Poor
(whites) have the Gospel preached unto them. Suffer the little
white children to come unto Me! for of such is the kingdom of
heaven. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and
strength and thy white neighbor as thyself!"

But these Negro quarters, these submerged souls, this
"darkest America" -- Ah this is our terrible "Problem"! This
mass that menaces Anglo Saxon civilization "unabsorbed and unab-
sorbable!"

But this time our traveler is wholly inoculated. "It is
truly a peculiar problem to be sure. He does not quite see how
the question can be solved. He is disposed with Mr. Bryce to trust
much to the vis medicatrix naturae and to hope that somehow,
somewhere, and somewhen the Sphinx will answer its own riddle,
and yet I am no pessimist regarding the future of my people in
America. God reigns and the good will prevail. It must prevail.
While these are times that try men’s souls, while a weak and d
despised people are called upon to vindicate their right to
exist in the face of a race of hard, jealous, intolerant, all-
subduing instincts, while the iron of their wrath and bitter
prejudice cuts into the very bones and marrow of my people, I
have faith to believe that God has not made us for naught and He
has not ordained to wipe us out from the face of the earth.
I believe, moreover, that America is the land of destiny for the
descendants of the enslaved race, that here in the house of their
bondage are the seeds of promise for their ultimate enfranchise-
ment and development. This I maintain in full knowledge of what
at any time maybe wrought by a sudden paroxysm of rage caused by
the meaningless war whoop of some obscure politicians such as the
rally word of "Negro domination" which at times deafens and
bemuddles all ears.

Negro domination! Think of it! The great American eagle,
soaring majestically sunward, eyes ablaze with conscious power,
suddenly screaming and shivering in fear of a little mouse colored
starling, which he may crush with the smallest finger of his great
claw. Yet this mad shriek is allowed to unbridge the worst passions
of wicked men, to stifle and seal up the holiest instincts of good
men. In dread of domination by a race whom they outnumber five to
one, with every advantage in civilization, wealth, culture, with
absolute control of every civil and military nerve center,
Anglo Saxon America is in danger of forgetting how to deal justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with its God.

In the old days, I am told that two or three Negroes gathered together in supplication and prayer, were not allowed to present their petition at the throne of Grace without having it looked over and revised by a white man for fear probably that white supremacy and its "peculiar" system might be endangered at the Court of the Almighty by these faltering lips and uncultured tongues! The same fear cowers the white man's heart today. He dare not face his God with a lie on his lips.

These "silent sullen peoples" (so called because sympathetically unknown and unloved) are the touchstone of his conscience. America with all her wealth and power, with her pride of inventions and mastery of the forces of nature, with all her breadth of principles and height of ideals, will never be at peace with herself till this question is settled and settled right. It is the conscience in her throat that is "unabsorbed and Unabsorbable!"

The despairing wail of Macbeth's blood stained queen in all her gilded misery at the moment of her sickening success, is profoundly and everlastingly true: "Better be that which we destroy!" It is in the power of this mighty nation to turn upon us in a St. Bartholomew's Massacre and in one bloody day reckon us among the extinct races of history. A governor of Georgia is reported to have declared that "a dead Negro in the back yard" was his suggestion for settling this question, and another has
recommended that a reward be offered for every one so disposed of.

But the Negro's blood on this great Nation becomes a heavier burden than the Negro's education and Christianization. His extermination will weigh more than all the weight of his uplift and regeneration. A nation's dishonor is a far more serious problem to settle than the extension of a brother's hand and a Christian's grip by a favored race bearing the torch, as a sacred trust from the Source of All light to lead, enlighten and lift. Ye who have the light owe it to the least of these my brethren.

"Is your God a wooden fetish
To be hidden out of sight,
That his block eyes may not see you
Do the thing that is not right?
But the Destinies think not so;
To their judgment chamber goes
Comes no voice of popular clamor
There Fame's trumpet is not blown
But their silent way they keep.
Where empires towered that were not just,
As the skulking wild fox scratches
in a little heap of dust."

B This it were well for great powers to ponder. The right to rule entails the obligation to rule right. Righteousness and Righteousness only exalteth a nation and the surest guarantee of the perpetuity of our institutions is alliance with God's eternal forces that make for rightness and justness in His world.

As for the Negro there can be no doubt that these trials are God's plan for refinement of the good gold to be found in him. The dross must be purged out. There is no other way than by fire.

If the great Refiner sees that a stronger truer, purer racial character can be evolved from His crucible by heating the furnace
seven times, He can mean only good.

With hearty earnestness the million and half colored boys and girls in the public schools South repeat on June 14 the salute to their country's flag:

"I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the country for which it stands." I commend these boys and girls to you for as staunch and loyal a yeomanry as any country can boast. They are Americans, true and bona fide citizens - not by adoption or naturalization but by birth and blood incontestable.

Whatever may be problematical about us, our citizenship is beyond question. We have owned no other allegiance, have bowed before no other sovereign. Never has hand of ours been raised either in open rebellion or secret treachery against the Fatherland.

Our proudest aspiration has been but to serve her, the crown of our glory to die for her. We were born here thro no choice of our own or of our ancestors; we cannot expatriate ourselves, even if we would. When the wild forces of hate and unholy passion are unleashed to run riot against us our hearts recoil not more in dread of such a catastrophe for ourselves than in grief and shame at the possibility of such a fall and such a failure for our country's high destiny. It is unconceivable that we should not feel the unnatural prejudice environing us and our children. It is like stones between our teeth and like iron in the marrow of our bones. If at such times we
cannot sing America it is not because of any treason lurking in our hearts. Our harps are hung on the willows and in the Babylon of our sorrow we needs must sit down and weep. But no dynamite plots are hatching amongst us. No vengeful uprising brewing. We are a song loving people and that song of all songs we would love to sing, and we challenge the lustiest singer to sing it more lustily and more eloquently than we. But when the wound is festering and the heart is so sore we can only suffer and be silent, praying God to change the hearts of our misguided countrymen and help them to see the things that make for righteousness.

Then pray we shall that come it may for come it will for a 'that.

That man to man the world o'er shall brothers be for a 'that.