

Personal.

409 FIFTH STREET, N. E.,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

September 1st, 1891

Hon. Albion W. Tourgee,

Mayville, N. Y.

My dear Mr. Tourgee:-

Your esteemed favor of August 6th has just reached me. I am unable to account for the delay. I presume, however, that it may be due to the fact that it was addressed to one of the numerous James E. Bruces who inhabit this city of "magnificent distance" and rich office holders, who kept it a reasonable time and then turned it over to the postman. I infer this much from the numerous memoranda on the envelope suggesting that "24, try Jno. E. Bruce 409 5th St. N. E. "not at" "refused &c, &c."

I have read your letter carefully, and I hope understandingly. The questions embraced in it are weighty and the hints you throw out are valuable, true some of your bricks have spikes in them and they hurt, but I am not going to complain because I sometimes indulge in that pastime myself. I quite agree with you that the inevitable outcome of the irrepressible conflict now going on, may result in the Negro resorting to more radical measures to maintain his place and to command the respect of his oppressors. They have in the waters of South Carolina a fish known to the common herd as the "Cushion Fish", so named because when they are handled, they swell up and resemble a pin-cushion. The leaders of the Colored race are its cushion fish. They are so puffed up with their own importance and vanity that they lose sight entirely of the people whose interests they pretend to serve.

Your illustrations showing the results of the dogged determination

of your own race, its unconquered and unconquerable grit, and the willingness with which not only the Jews, but my race submit to oppression and outrage is argument enough to convince any Negro that manhood pays.

The Englishman who is outraged in this country has a strong and powerful government behind him to demand reparation for injuries sustained if he be a citizen of the United States and is wronged by his adopted country he has the sympathy of and can always rely upon the English Government for the exercise of its good offices in his behalf. To whom, can the Negro look for protection when his home is invaded, his life threatened, his liberty abridged and his rights as a citizen denied? Certainly not to the Federal Government or to Congress, or to the Supreme Court, for each and all these branches of Government have tacitly refused to admit that Negroes have any rights which white men are bound to respect. The Supreme Court's verdict in the Slaughter House Cases has since been declared unconstitutional, though it was believed at the time it was rendered to have been within the purview of the law and the constitutional amendments. Congress and every Republican President has dallied with the question affecting the status of my race as citizens of the Government which their labor helped to enrich, and their valor to perpetuate. Tell me if you will or can, how 800,000 Negroes may obtain justice and fair treatment from the 5,000,000 white people in this country who own the railroads, steamship, telegraph lines, manufacture and own all the firearms and ammunition, in fact own everything worth having in this country? The press with some notable exceptions is prejudiced against us and the white American church piously loves God and hates "niggers". Yet amid all this opposition to our advancement as a race we have under God made "some progress" as you say. I have an unalterable faith in the promises of God and therefore believe that what seems to you to be an unsolvable problem as it relates to the destiny of the Negro race in America is

after all not so difficult of solution as it seems. God's ways are not man's ways. He takes the foolish things of this world to confound the wise__ and since he intervened to break the shackles from our limbs more than a quarter of a century ago I do not believe he is going to leave us to the rapucity, of the hitherto unconquered, and unconquerable white men.

We began to raise martyrs many years ago but they do not seem to thrive in this climate. Nat Turner's insurrection in Virginia had the same effect upon the white people of this country that a similar up-
 rising among the Negroes would produce upon the public mind in our day, the Negro hating press and the Negro hating orators in and out of Congress would deal with us as they dealt with them and every man of us would be characterized as a muderous black brute__ fiends incarnate, Devils from Hell, and other warm climates. These papers and orators would play upon the passions of the white race, they would paint the picture in the blackest colors and so intensify the feelings against us as a race for daring to strike for our liberties that I fear we would soon be exterminated or our ranks so decimated that we wouldn't hanker after another such opportunity for a century at least. You are all right Judge Tourgee, my old friend John H. Smith formerly minister to Liberia vouches for your sincerity, and zeal in a manner to leave no doubt as to your real position on every phase of the great question of human rights. I am no pessimist, but I declare I wouldn't give fifteen cents for all the ~~money~~ left, after they, tried their hands at the uprising business. I realize the force and point of your observation that we "could dispose of a good many ministers to advantage"__ should we ever have occasion to resort to extreme measures, ^ for the sake of the great bulk of the race which is now forced to carry, among its other burdens these blind teachers and religious bunners. I could wish that we had more funerals from this class per week, for the next ten or

fifteen years than we have had in Past years, they are a positive hindrance to our moral, social, political, and intellectual advancement. I of course, allude to that class of emotional Jayhawkers who give direction to the religious thought of the great bulk of the Negroes in the South and elsewhere, who are utterly incompetent and morally unfit to teach, or to preach to a People as ignorant as themselves. I wish that we could be rid of this dangerous element, this incubus of ignorance, superstition, immorality and rascality which has weighted us down for more than a quarter of a century. Our so-called leaders in politics with here and there an honorable exception, are a set of unscrupulous mercenaries, who lack courage and manhood, who have sold us out to the highest bidder, and as ^{the} price of their treachery and duplicity have been given a few offices by the various Republican administrations since the War. What the Negroes of this country need is honest, unselfish leadership, the old-hacks, the Professional Negro-leaders haven't time to die, and seemingly have no inclination to loosen their grip, to step aside and give place to younger, abler, and better men.

I am in entire agreement with you when you say that the "Negro has been cowed by the very idea I put on paper" viz: that it would be a safe day when we appealed to arms" etc. I am still of the same opinion. I don't see any remedy for the condition which confronts us, nor how we can improve that condition by the shedding of blood or breaking of bones, there is no earthly use for us to have our feelings hurt without some accompanying benefit. You believe that your race would change its methods of dealing with my race, if my race would show some sign to indicate that it will retaliate when imposed upon. On this point we do not agree. Prejudice against the Negro is on the increase, it is more marked in Washington today than it was after the war. Private families and public houses are getting rid of Negro domestics, and supplying their places with Irish and German and French servants.

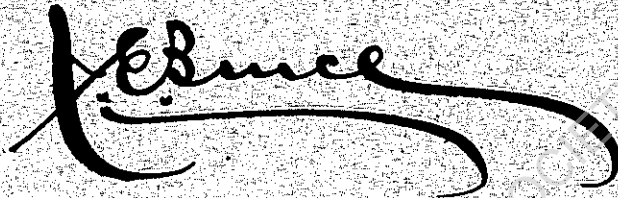
In New York the leading hotels employ white waiters, chambermaids, cooks, coachmen, &c., why is this judge? The crop of domestics (black) in Virginia, Maryland and the farther southern states are just as competent, docile and industrious as ever, they are tractable and willing to adapt themselves to new conditions and environments, and where they find good homes and fair wages in the north they make faithful and loyal servants and are true to the interests of their employers. But blood is thicker than water. This is evidenced from year to year by the seeming desire on the part of Northern white men—former sutlers and camp followers in the Union Army to unite the Blue and the Gray, to shake hands across the bloody chasm, to apologise to the South for having humiliated it, to build up, to re-unite "our country" by uniting the "Blue and the Gray" in one mighty effort to wipe out of the memory of man every recollection of that fratricidal struggle to perpetuate human slavery, to rob my race of the right to be of manhood and all the blessing of liberty, equality and freedom. These annual and quadruennial outpourings from northern men who would pose as the apologists for the brave men who fought to make this a nation and the Union perpetual is in my humble judgement the cheapest grade of sentimental rot and gollawash. These blue and gray advocates would be among the first of the rebel sympathizers in the north to come to the rescue of the white people of the south, in any contest in which the Negro was a principal.

Your are right in the conviction that the crucial period for my race lies in the future and not in the past and you doubtless have the best of reasons for that conviction. With my limited ability I see many things which tell me that the Negro will have a particularly hard row to hoe in this country in the years to come and that the sooner he makes the spelling book the sceptre of national power the better it will be for his health in every way, I thank you judge, for this

sentiment, quoted above, And now, without feeling that I have answered your interesting and instructive letter, written in a kindly spirit and with, as I believe, a sincere desire to evidence your interest in and friendship for my race and the "cause that needs defending", conscious of my inability to cope with you as a reasoner and logician, as a thinker and a writer, I send you this acknowledgement of your favor, with the message that I have done what I could.

I am honored sir and friend,

Your most Obedient Servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Bruce". The signature is written in dark ink and features a long, sweeping flourish that extends to the right.