

The Future of the Colored Man

The Southern Negro's Idea

The Future of the Negro

The Negro's View of the Future of his Race.

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The Negro's Relation to the Future.

The real sentiment of a race or people cannot always be gathered from explicit statements. Not infrequently words have to be construed by acts, and the actual tendency inferred rather from what is done than from what is said. Especially is this true when those who assume to be the leaders of a people's thought while allied to them by race or birth are separated from their real life by certain intangible but not the less impassable barriers. What is the common sentiment of a people and whether it coincides with their expressed opinions can of course, only be determined by continued observation and the selection of such individuals as representative of the whole who are neither too far above nor yet too far below the median

line of their common life. In regard
to no people was this task more difficult
perhaps than with the Negro of the South.

His ^{professed} leaders are either political or religious
and from that very fact, are more inclined
to be teachers than observers.

The Negroes Destiny

¶ Such sentiments as the above are common among the more thoughtful and intelligent of the colored people of the South. They have ^{all} the slave's marvellous power of judging men by look and tone — an instinct as accurate as that of the dog — and have been trained to prudence by generations of systematic espionage and repression. The memory of the patrol has not yet faded from their minds, and they have not yet entirely recovered from the natural effects of that system which made the white man a constant spy upon their acts and words. From such utterances as these repeated many hundred times in effect by men of all ranks and occupations, in widely separated localities, I have arrived at these conclusions, in regard to the attitude of the colored people of the South, toward the future of their race:

First, The colored people of the

First; The blacks ~~expect~~ ^{propose} to remain ~~just~~ where they now are, and intend, literally, to "grow up with the country." Whatever prosperity it may have they expect to share. They have now no idea of any general migration and have never been inclined toward such a movement except as a choice between the direct and the indirect.

Second: They have no idea of occupying forever the subordinate and menial relation they now occupy, but expect to rise more or less rapidly to the level of the white race in their capacity for self-support and self-direction. They expect also, to secure and exercise a like power, man for man, with their white neighbors in the direction and control of public affairs.

Third - They expect to achieve the power necessary to accomplish their ends, mainly through a progress based upon intelligence. They appreciate much more clearly than the whites of that region what has already been gained in this direction and are consequently much more eager for an extension and enlargement

of their educational opportunities.

Any estimate of the future of the Negro in America that shall omit to take account of these propositions as among the most essential elements of the problem will be radically defective and any policy whether national or state, which shall be based upon such estimate, is not only destined to meet with failure, but in all probability, will lead to ~~serious~~ consequences of the most serious and perhaps perilous character.

The question of the future of the Negro in America, not many months ago, was discussed in these pages by a notable galaxy of men of both races. In almost every case, the writers seemed to consider it incumbent upon them not so much to shed any new light upon the all-important question of racial harmony as bearing upon the future of the Negro not merely as a political and economic factor but also as a moral and social element of our life, but rather to advance some new reasons or reiterate certain well-worn arguments in support of one or the other of two theories, ^{both} based upon erroneous hypotheses. The one of these theories contemplates the permanent retention of the colored man as an inferior and menial element of the Southern population. The other is based upon the fallacy that the colored man having been given his formally endowed with abstract legal equality, has only to await some ~~marvellous~~ miraculous modification of sentiment on the part of the Southern whites to be allowed to step at once upon the platform of equal ~~and~~ civil and political rights.

Both of these theories neglect entirely the most important element of the question, to-wit; the development of the Negro race itself. The one presupposes that he will make no material progress in civilization and the other that he needs to make none. The one premises that he will never be capable of competing with the white man in the race of civilization. The other is based on the hypothesis that he only needs political recognition and opportunity to relieve him from all apprehension as to the future. In both of these estimates of his future therefore, the colored man's own view of his future is ~~lost~~ almost entirely lost sight of. A part of the writers it is true belong to this race but they are so far separated from its average life that ~~it may & will be doubted if~~ and are besides so deeply committed to the sufficiency of certain political theories as a remedy for all ills, that it may be doubted if their estimate of its prospective career is any more reliable than that of the men who admit themselves unable to conceive of the Negro as ever

holding a false position relatively to the white race
materially different from that he now holds.

Regarding the progress of the race in in-
telligence as far more important than either
his political or economic progress, and
deeming the general underlying sentiment of
the race in regard to such progress as by far the
most important element thereof, I have taken
some pains to ascertain and define the real status
of the colored man ~~to~~ ~~as~~ in reference
to the future. The real sentiment of a race or
people is often very difficult to determine. Words
are not infrequently at war with acts. Those
who claim to be leaders are quite as often
followers of some other influence or sentiment.
Those ~~of it~~ who dwell on its lower levels
may feel ~~it~~ ^{it} but rarely formulate. Hence is the
maxim that actions speak louder than words more
fully illustrated than in such cases. There is no doubt

but the negro usually declared himself absolutely satisfied with the state and condition of servitude so long as he remained a slave though he rarely neglected an opportunity to escape. In that case the race judged by its words would have condemned its liberators. The ~~reason~~ ^{reason} was single and ~~of~~ apparent so that ~~no one~~ ^{no one} was deceived. Yet considered without the frequent commentary afforded by his acts, the word of the slave might, perhaps, have been accepted by the world as conclusion against his own hope. I have based my conclusions, therefore, in regard to the view which the negro as a race takes of the future and of his own opportunity and destiny, primarily upon my own observation of his spirit and conduct, extending

through the entire period since his emancipation and embracing every possible form and variety of experience he has been called upon to undergo. My opportunity for observation has been exceptional in this respect both because of the numerous aspects of the life of the colored man of the South that I have been permitted to observe and the fact that I possessed the entire confidence of all those with whom I ~~came~~ came in contact not merely ~~because~~ on account of ^{any} individual characteristics but of my openly and publicly expressed sympathy with their misfortunes and my well understood relations to movements designed to ^{secure} promote not merely their political but also their moral and intellectual development and elevation. Secondly, I have been guided in a great degree by the opinions of those whom I personally knew to be fair representatives or close observers of the average life and aspirations of the race.

As a rule, these men have been individuals who have been unusually successful in business affairs — shrewd, capable men who know well when to speak and when to keep silence. From their sources and with their opportunities, I have derived the conclusions set forth in the following pages. ~~I do not claim that these~~ views are entitled to more consideration than another's except from the fact of exceptional opportunity for investigation and the further fact that the problem of the co-occupancy of Southern soil by the two races (it would be manifestly improper as yet to speak of it as a joint-tenancy which not only implies the existence but the exercise of an equality of rights by each) — has been ~~for eighteen years the special and peculiar~~ ~~subject~~ my special and peculiar study & ~~fact~~.

~~The first thing that needs to be noted is that the colored man of the South realizes the necessity~~

~~As the first essential of an accurate~~

As the first essential, of a true appreciation of the Negro's attitude towards the question of the future of his race, we must premise that ~~his~~ his mind is not affected by one element of doubt which naturally obtrudes itself upon every white man's thought; He does not believe that he is inherently and necessarily ^{the} inferior to the white man in intellectual capacity, moral or physical stamina. He believes himself as ~~good~~ capable of development self-support and self-direction given the same antecedent opportunities for growth and development. Upon this branch of the question he wastes no thought. It is an admitted, underlying premise in his mind, the ex-

distance of which is very often overlooked by the white man who undertakes to estimate his mental and moral status. Having no doubt upon this matter he is compelled to account for the distance which separates them in the scale of development by ^{the action} external causes, and first among these and separated from all others by a long interval, is the fact of the superior intelligence of the white man resulting as he believes solely from ~~this~~ the ^{better} greater educational facilities which he has enjoyed. To his mind this constitutes the chief, if not the only difference between

the present mental status of the white and colored man.

Because of this fact the colored man, no matter how dull and sluggish his brain may be is fully to the necessity ~~as~~

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and importance of individual intelligence as an element of progress and success. He fully understands the value of education to the individual and appreciates it all the more highly because of the ~~sharp~~ contrast between his own estate and the condition of the dominant race which is ever before his eyes. As a consequence of this sharp contrast which is ever before his mind, the Negro of the South

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