

Wayville N. Y.

Oct. 12th 1889.

Robt Kellogg Esq: (The Plumber, Detroit, Mich.)

Dear Sir: Your circular containing the letter of

Mr. William Matthews and the reply of Mr. J. M. Hamilton, is recd, with your request that I give my opinion in regard to the same.

It seems to me manifestly improper that I should give any opinion on such a subject. It is a question entirely for the ^{consideration} ~~decision~~ of colored men and which they are fully capable of deciding ^{wisely} for themselves.

I have no hesitation in saying that if an equal number of native American citizens bearing white skins, were distinguished against as the colored people of the United States are, such an organization would have been effected in every ^{cranny} nook and ~~corner~~ of the country long ago.

Of course, not all colored men any more than ~~or~~ all white men, can be expected to look at such a matter in the

same light and unless great wisdom is exercised in its organization and direction, it may be expected to result in failure. It is the first step the race has attempted of its own motion, towards self-assertive freedom — the only freedom that can ever be relied on to give good results. And I for one shall welcome it with the highest qualification.

If Irishmen may organize to aid Irish in improving the conditions of Ireland, or other nationalities among our citizenship to perpetuate the traditions of the land of their nativity, I cannot see why it is not merely the privilege but the bounden duty of the only class of our native citizens whom anyone has ever proposed to deprive of the privileges so readily conferred upon the ^{alien} ~~white foreigner~~, should not

organize to consult and act together for the assertion and maintenance of their lawful rights in a lawful manner.

My opinion for many years has been freely expressed that the chief error on the part of the friends of the Negro in the United States, has been a desire to steer him in the ~~or~~ what they may deem the right direction rather than stimulate him to act for himself. I recognize the difficulties in the way of such an organization. I do not doubt that if it should be attempted to be carried into effect in the South the category of martyrs would soon be a very notable one, but there is no better use to ~~put a~~ ^{be made} of a man than

have him planted as the seed of a good cause and it would seem to be about time the colored race ~~and~~ began a martyrology which shall enumerate the names of those suffering to achieve ~~as well as the~~ ~~to take the place of~~ to enumerate the rather overcrowded one which testifies to their ~~endless~~ long-suffering endurance of oppression.

There is no doubt in my mind that the colored man must take the laboring oar in the movement for his real enfranchisement. He cannot and ought not to be the mere creature and servant of any party unless that party is active and earnest in its efforts to secure for him the rights he is now denied to so great an extent and which in the near future are likely to be still more openly excluded.

Ten years ago I wrote in "A Fool's Errand"
"A people cannot be made free by proclama-
tions or Constitutional Amendment!"

Those measures only opened the door to
the Negro to make himself free. What the race has
suffered in those terrible years of transition have
only been the prick of the spear that is pushing it
forward to the assertion of its manhood and the
full achievement of its rights. If it is worthy of
equality of right and privilege, the time has come
for it to dip its garments in the blood of the slain
and press forward to the attainment of that liberty
which asserts its claim to justice ~~and~~ rather than
petition always for mercy. If it is not worthy it
will simply slip in the blood of those who
have perished for its disenfranchisement and
slip ~~down~~ ^{back into} deserved inferiority. ~~Connect~~
~~and~~ united and intelligent action on
the part of the colored men of the United
States will do very much to cure the evils

which now affect it and relieve the country from the most fearful peril that has ever threatened it; while mere discord and "hollering" by men anxious not so much to do as to explain what ought to be done, will amount to very little. Very great difficulties stand in the way of an effective organization of this kind and the chances are perhaps about even that no tangible good will result from it; but any sort of effort under present conditions, is better than no effort.

The one thing that needs now to be done — more than all others — is to inform the intelligent thinking people of the North of ^{the} actual Southern conditions.

* This the colored man must in the main, do for himself and he must devise the ways and means adapted to new conditions for doing it. The race will never have another Garrison or Phillips to fight its battles for it. With them has perished, too, the instruments they used so effectually. New ones must be formed. What they will be I cannot tell but such an organization as that you Mr. Matthews proposes, if effectually administered, ought within a year to accumulate a mass of facts which should challenge the attention of the Christian world without submitting their informants to the peril of persecution therefor. Here will be formed one

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of the chief difficulties, since the colored man of the North is too apt to forget that the colored man of the South can only tell what he knows when fully assured that he will never be known as having revealed it. It is a strange fact that the tongue of the few of the his Northern Kinsman who has gotten further away from his harsh conditions, not more frequently becomes a serious if not fatal enemy.

Therefore,
While I do not presume to counsel in regard to this matter, you will permit me to say that, in my opinion, it is high time the Negro race in America, did something — as a race — to

~~assert~~ proclaim their willingness and
ability to maintain their right to exer-
cise the privileges granted them and to
~~preserve~~ ^{preserve} for their children the liberties
so many shed their blood to secure.

Sincerely Yours

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