A BYSTANDER'S NOTES.

Comment still continues to pour in upon what the press chooses to term the Bystander's "recent prediction," that, "unless the attitude of the South towards the colored race changes, we shall have within the next ten years a massacre which has not been parelled since the French Revolution."

These comments, some public in the press, some personal and individual and some anonymous, are in the main, reasonable and serious as befits men who are brought face to face with conditions they see at once to be of unusual gravity. Such men judging the probability of the future by what they would be their own conduct under like circumstances naturally see that here are two great social forces, one demanding justice and equality of right in fact as already granted by constitutional enactment, and the other, while admitting such granted, denying the power of the Nation to enforce it by law or the exercise of judicial or executive authority, and declaring that among

the fact of race and color shall forever mark inequality of right between two classes of citizens of the United States. Such men readily admit that when two such forces number millions, each are so inextricably commingled with the other that almost every house in the region under consideration shelters individuals of both classes, while education constantly sharpens the sensibility and resentment of the injured class, the peril to be apprehended can hardly be measured by comparison with any historical event. Yet there are those who curiously question and palter with known and undeniable facts and with an infinite variety of motive denounce the Bystander for simply pointing to these two opposing forces, as if he were the responsible cause of the existence or tendency of one or the other, while others still profess to find a difference between the "Negro nature" and the universal human nature which voids the force of the deduction.

The man who is forever asking how a thing is to be done and denying that an event is likely to occur because he does not know the

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details of it before it becomes a fact, comes to the surface with amazing complacency in some of these comments.

"How does he (the Bystander) imagine that such a conflict can ever occur?" asks one wise blockhead, adding in explanation of his own stupidity, "the colored people are weak, ignorant, poor, unarmed and unorganized. How can it be possible that they should overpower and destroy the white people if they should be so foolish as to make the attempt?"

This man represents a class who profess to believe that the Bystander meant to assert that the colored people would overpower the white people of the South. As a fact, he intimated nothing of the kind. So far as the result of such an outbreak is concerned he ventured no prediction--none could be ventured by any sane man. Certain facts are known, the contrasted conditions, opposing demands, the denial of inherent and constitutional rights on the ground of the claimed superiority of one and the asserted inferiority of the other. To assert that these tendencies must produce conflict is no

more propesy than to declare that two lines not paralell, if infinite-
ly protracted must somewhere intersect. It is simply to proclaim
the inevitable.

The only indeterminate elements of the problem are when, where
and from what specific cause. No man can determine these any more
than when a powder magazine will explode or what will be the cause
of the spark that shall cause the explosion. Such outbreaks never
come from a predeterminable cause. The oppressed class simply en-
dures until some fresh ~~fan~~ wrong, often trivial in comparison with
what has been endured, stirs it to desperation and havoc ensues.

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The fact that the oppressed class is "poor, ignorant, unorganized and
unarmed," instead of being an argument against such a catastrophe,
is the strongest possible one in its favor. If the colored people
of the South were rich, intelligent, organized, armed and independent
there would be no danger of collision, because there would be no in-
justice. They would obtain their rights without such desperate ap-

peal. The law would then be fairly administered. Personal and collective equality of right and privilege would be freely accorded. Apparent power always commands respect and the white people of the South w would be very careful how they stirred to strife seven millions of people whom they knew would be in every way prepared for it.

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It is the contempt which the average white man of the South has for the Negro as ~~a force~~ which is the most dangerous ~~element of~~ thing about the situation. He says, "What can the nigger do? One white man is equal to a score or a hundred of them. Just see how we kept him down as a slave. See how the KUKlux ran him away from the polls. It is no job to keep the nigger down. Just kill a few of them and make the rest think their turn will come next; that is all that is necessary. But you must not stop to reason with them. Just as soon as you begin to argue with a nigger you have lost all control of him. He hasn't sense enough to listen to reason and loses all respect for a white man who tries to convince him."

These words are taken from the very lips of an intelligent Southern man who lately expounded the situation for the Bystander's enlightenment. He is far enough from being a bad man or a stupid one. The difficulty is that he thoroughly believes what he says and cannot see that in this belief lies the danger. This under-estimate of an opposing sentiment or force is peculiarly the fault of Southern life. It is without doubt the result of long-continued individual absolutism. The white man dominated so completely the slave and led so easily the "poor white" even to destruction, that he has never been able justly to estimate the power of moral or material forces that antagonize his desire. He despised the Abolition movement, defied the sentiment of the world, counted the "Yankee" a mere "mud-sill;" thought one Southern man the equal of five Northern ones in war; imagined that he could break down the barriers of law and civilization by the wild barbarism of the Kuklux epoch and suffer no evil therefor. because he was a "Southern gentleman."

It is the sheerest folly and by it the South has suffered the

bitterest woes. If her people has justly estimated the forces against them there would have been no attempt at secession and no war, but gradual emancipation, peace and prosperity instead. All that the South has suffered in the past is directly traceable to the absurd over-estimate of themselves by the white people of that section. It is an atractive quality, sometimes a little absurd, but always dangerous when it comes to control the relations of classes or people. To-day, it is by all odds the most dangerous element of the Southern problem, because it is not at all likely to percieve its error until it is too late to be amended.

The absurdity of some of the objections are laughable. "You old liar," says one irate correspondent, "you know there is no danger of such a massacre as you pretend to fear. Before the niggers had killed a thousand white people we would send a hundred thousand of the black devils to--, and if they ever dare attempt to burn us out, by ----- we will exterminate the whole race--men, women and children!"

The writer does not seem to be conscious that he is confirming the Bystander's views in the most emphatic manner. His declarations are infinitely more bloody and barbarous than the Bystander's comparison. The slaughter he predicts as the result of any resistance to white oppression would put the horror of the French Revolution so much in the shade that the world would almost forget it as an instance of the barbarism that underlies a Christain civilization.

About nine out of every ten of the objections, both public and private, repeat what every intelligent man should know by this time, to be a pair of falsehoods, to wit: (1) That there is but one offence for which a black man is condemned by Judge Lynch; and (2) That white men are equally subject to the same punishment. The facts are, that only a little over one-fourth of the colored men lynched in the past twelve years have been charged with that offence, and that no white man has been punished for it in any manner when his victim was a colored woman.

One who signs herself, "A Southern lady," reproaches the Bystander in language which casts a doubt on her right to use that pseudonym, for denouncing the inhuman barbarities of the Southern mob, and declares that whoever opposes lynching wishes to leave the Southern white woman, "unprotected to the mercy of Negro fiends."

The lyncher is the worst enemy of the virtuous Southern woman. In the first place, by putting accusation on the same plane with proof, he degrades the lady to the level of the prostitute. The temptation to a debased woman to hide or excuse her shame by preferring such a charge is very great. That there are such women is a fact too apparent to any one at all acquainted with the population, of the South to require argument. To one who for fifteen years was familiar with the records of bastardy in a dozen counties, it seems impossible that men should unblushingly assert that "no white woman ~~yields herself~~ ever willingly becomes the paramour of a colored man." Without citing instances, it is enough to call attention to the fact that a very large proportion of the "free negroes" of the South in ante-bellum days were the descendants of white wo-

men. This is hardly to be wondered at when we consider the frquency of this relation between white men and colored women, not only in the old slave days, but at the present time, and the indifference with which such a relation is regarded by the "best society" of the South.

If, however, we accept at par all that is claimed of the Negro's libidness barbarity, which it is by no means safe to do, we are led irresistibly back to the saddest and most humiliating fact connected with the whole matter, to wit, that the lesson of unbridled ~~lic~~ lust was for two hundred years seduously taught to the colored man of the South by the law and practice of our ~~Christian~~ civilization. When the interests of slavery made it necessary that the Negro should be denied the privileges, refused the protection and released from the responsibility of marriage, home and family ties; when the colored woman was left unguarded by the law, by the sentiment of society and by any obligation of marital duty, seeds of lawless passion were no doubt sown, the fruits of which were destined to bring

trouble to the descendants of those who taught the terrible lesson.

It is impossible to make any people believe that the lives and persons and homes of one race alone are sacred in the eyes of God, or that the law is just which throws its shield about the white man's home and possessions and guards the white woman's honor while it leaves the colored man's life and property insecure and the colored woman's virtue open to unrebuked assault.

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The highest incentive to civic virtue of all sorts, is the belief in equal justice: the most dangerous sentiment that can prevail is the sense of injustice. A man whether white or black, is inclined to observe the law as much or more from a sense of the advantage to be derived from such a course, as from fear of the penalty of its infraction.

Violence is always the nurse of violence. Wherever lynching is prevalent, homicides are always abundant. The citizen upholds the law when the law protects him. When a man knows that he and his home be outside the pale of legal protection, the worst instead of the

better elements of his nature naturally prevail. A man is never so dangerous to a community as when he says: "One might as well die for a big sheep as a little lamb." The consciousness that accusation is equivalent to proof, has beyond all question, been the controlling incentive to many of the crimes which are especially charged against the colored race. The true way to protect the white women of the South from violence is to do two things: (1) Assure the accused in every case a fair trial. There is nothing deters from false accusation like fear of impartial judicial investigation, of a crime. In his own legal experience the Bystander has known three cases in which women have confessed to having made false charges of this character even when the punishment of the crime was death. Jealousy and shame are two of the strongest motives, especially of feminine humanity, and as long as the mob rushes the victim to condign punishment, without the formality of trial, false accusations will constitute a very prominent feature of the harvest of evils which will result.

(2) The next most important thing to be done to secure this aim, is to protect the colored woman. It is not too much to say that the legal execution of one white man for ravishing a colored woman would do more to repress this crime than the burning of a score of colored men charged with undue familiarty with a white woman. Today, the great mass of the colored people believe the protestations of innocence on the part of a majority of the victims. This in many cases has been strikingly confirmed. If they saw justice fairly administered and the violators of their own daughters punished as well, they would become active and earnest supporters of law and order. It is too much to expect a people to be staunch supporters of a law which is enforced against criminals of their own race with unexampled rigor and made a shield rather than a terror to those offending against them.

The Bystander's attention has been repeatedly called with a curious gusto to the fact that lynchings have increased greatly in number at the North during recent years and that colored men have sometimes been the victims of such unlawful violence. The writers seem to think that these facts are a sufficient excuse for all that may have happened elsewhere.

The Bystander is not the especial champion of the colored man and has never been the excuser of crime anywhere or on the part of any person. It is a very sad fact that, in the states North of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi, instances of mob violence have of late been much more numerous than ever before. From 1875 until the present the number of lynchings in that territory is known to have been many times greater than in the 16 years preceeding, that is, from 1860 to 1875, inclusive. For this, there are many reasons, some of them of a very startling character, but none more patent and none so perilous as the conviction of immunity resulting from the fact that the great epidemic of unlawful violence at the South which is known

to history as the KuKlux conspiracy,--the greatest outbreak of murder and violence known to modern ~~history~~ times--was not only unpunished but resulted in political victory and renown to its leaders and promoters. At that very time the Bystander pointed out the fact that the Nation and the South were "both sowing to the wind, by permitting such violence to go unpunished, and must surely reap the whirlwind in the near future." Is not the whirlwind here?

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Other objectors have called attention to the fact that the colored men of a Southern town have recently hanged one of their own number for assault upon a colored woman.

It is rather comical, the white man trying to excuse himself by citing the Negro as an example. But really, if it is not a bad lesson to teach the colored citizen, if they get the notion that they can lynch a colored man at will, are they not likely to think they can put a rope around a white man's neck whenever they think he needs choking?

The Bystander's attention is also called to the fact that some wealthy and influential colored men of the North and a well known colored bishop, declares that there is no danger of any collision between the races. The one rests his opinion on the ground that preachers and teachers are not killed, but only poor negroes against whose characters there is some suspicion of evil. The others insist that the colored people of the South will keep on suffering whatever may be imposed on them, in order that they may "finally secure a reasonable degree of justice." Well, they must have great confidence in the powers of endu ance of their people. The week is only half out and there have been five more lynchings.

But one man writes--a Southern Democrat--and says: "I realize the truth of your prognostication. Your view of Southern conditions and the danger attending them, seems to me clear, dispassionate and c correct. I have long been inclining to the same conclusions. Now, will you tell me if you think there is any remedy aside from the

power of the National government--anything in which the individual citizen of the South can take part without humiliation or reflection on others?"

The question is a strange one, coming from such a source. The writer is on the right track, however, and if there were more like him the peril might perhaps even yet be avoided. If he will think a moment he will percieve that the great difficulty, ~~in the way~~, henceforth, will be to induce the colored people to believe that they are fairly and justly treated in the Courts. This is not strange when we reflect that, in addition to the barbarous cruelties imposed on ~~them~~ those of their race charged with crime and the practical immunity with which their rights of life and person are invaded, a judge of the Supreme Court of one of those States has recently declared in the pages of a popular magazine, that, in a case between a white man and a Negro, he could not do impartial justice--but would unconsciously incline to the side of the white man.

The white people of the South have the remedy in their own

hands. They can by their own efforts, avert all peril of bloodshed or barbarism. They can remove all desire on the part of any one to interfere with their internal affairs or make them accountable for their acts to any other tribunal. This remedy is a simple one. Its name is JUSTICE. There is no other. Every form of injustice only aggravates the disease and makes the danger more imminent.

This remedy has three specially important ingredients, to wit:

(1)The punishment of the colored man only by the law after due trial and a verdict by his peers.

(2)The punishment of white men for crimes against colored people, in the same manner and with equal severity as if the cases were reversed.

(3)The same security in the enjoyment and exercise of legal rights and privileges as is accorded to the white citizen.

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Firmly convinced of this, the Bystander replied to his correspondent, that in his opinion, the wisest and most patriotic thing

that any Southern man could do was to recognize these facts and pro-
mote the establishment in his county or neighborhood of a law and
order league composed both of white and colored men, and having the
double object of securing the impartial punishment of criminals, no
matter of what race or against whom they may have offended, and the
prevention of lawless violence.

A week passed and the correspondent wrote again:

"The course you advise is a good one and I can think of no
other by which the end may be obtained. But it is either too late
or too early. I have talked with several about it: some agree; others
will not listen. I dare not undertake to do anything in that direc-
tion."

Is it in truth "too early or too late," to hope for justice?

Albion W. Tourgee.

Mayville, N.Y. July 8th 1892.