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Bible House. New York.

LeMoyne Normal Institute,

Memphis, Tenn., April 17th 1893

Hon. A. W. Tourgee,
Mayville, N.Y.

My dear Sir:

I enclose herewith a clipping from a recent issue of the Memphis Daily Commercial. It may interest you and call your attention to a very practical phase of the problem we have to work out in this country. I have greatly enjoyed your By-standers notes and I have long since come to the conclusion that you state so forcibly in the issue of the Interdena of the 15th. There would at once cease to be any serious race question if the religion of Christ, as held and practiced by most of his followers, had more of his spirit.

Very truly,

A. J. Steele.
Min.

THE RACE PROBLEM.

To the Editor of the Commercial:

If the negro consumes more than he makes, give the result?

We are of the opinion, that the colored family have consumed more than they have made since the war, and that the difference between their production and consumption is yearly increasing.

For a few years after the war the farmers seemed to make some money, but this was soon checked. Very few negroes accumulated anything, not one in fifty of the whole number. A majority of them fall more or less in debt every year either to their merchants or their landlords. I have asked during the last six years a great many farmers, and some merchants if the negroes, taking them all together in the upland counties, have made as much as they have consumed since the war. I have in all instances held my opinion till they had given theirs, and one uniform answer has been given, and that is, "The negroes have not made a living and paid a moderate rent on their lands," some add not more than one-half rents. The answer from so many representative men must be considered at least as bordering on the truth. A further evidence of the same thing is this: The sections where there are the most negroes are the least prosperous. Compare Marshall county, Miss., with Henry county, Tenn. Before the war the people of Marshall were very wealthy and were rapidly accumulating, while those of Henry were left far behind. The kin that came to Mississippi nearly all became rich, while those that settled in Northern Tennessee and Kentucky mostly attained only to economical living. Henry has but few negroes, Marshall many. Since the war Henry has developed far in advance, and Marshall has dropped to the rear. The lands in these two counties are about the same. In this comparison we do not consider the rich alluvial lands of the Yazoo delta, full of negroes, and the impoverished ridges bordering along the Tennessee river, where there is scarcely a negro to be found, and where the lands scarcely yield a support for any one. The rule is, making some allowance for difference in land, wherever there are most negroes, there is the least progress and wherever there are many negroes there is retrogression. I see no way to account for this, unless it is that the whole body of negroes fail to make a support, and thus become a burden upon the white man.

The farmers will tell you that about nineteen out of every twenty negro men are more or less in debt to white men, not with the slightest prospect of ever paying, while not more than one white man in fifty is so indebted to negroes. The whites of the South would today be well off if they could only collect this balance due them from the blacks. I am aware that statistics show some wealth accumulated since the war by negroes, but this is mostly by only a few individuals living in cities. And these parties oftener than otherwise are mulattoes.

To prove the extreme poverty of the farming negroes requires only a visit to see them. Scattering ones own their own cabin and a small tract of land, but the great mass of them own nothing, not two months' and many not even two days' provisions.

Before the war an able-bodied negro man would hire for \$200 and his board and clothing for a year, now about \$80 and board, to say nothing of clothes, is the average. In slavery times the wifes and children, of 8 years and older, were of some value, now they are little else than a burden to the men in a majority of cases. The single women generally make their own living either at farm work or as house servants, but at wages not exceeding half what was given in slavery times. I know of no cause for this great reduction in wages but the negro himself. Cotton is fully as high in the nineties as it was in the fifties, and the things he has to buy are as cheap or cheaper.

Very few of the women raised since the war are suitable for house servants, and the white women are yearly doing with less of their help, thus cutting off one source of their living. The colored men raised since the war are less thrifty and industrious, know less how to labor, either for themselves or as hirelings, than those raised in the days of slavery. They do their work more bungling, have less mechanical skill, have less management and take less pains to please their employers. The school is not succeeding so well in developing their minds and energies as did the fields of slavery. The negro is a creature of habit, and the further he becomes removed from the days of slavery the less will be his work habit. I once held the following conversation with Farmer A.:

"Farmer A., do you save your wheat really any cheaper by the use of your reaper than you used to save it with cradles?"

"It is a very great saving, sir."

"Farmer B told me it cost him more to save his with the reaper than it formerly did with cradles."

"No wonder. Farmer B. puts negroes to drive his, and of course they must break something every half day and lose a day to carry it to the shop. I run mine myself."

Another bad tendency in the colored race is that marriage without ceremony, and divorce without law, incontinence, licentiousness and rape are all manifold oftener than in the days of slavery, and are still on the increase.

An educated and highly intelligent man who had lived much among the half-civilized Indians of Montana once told me that there is no such a being as the historic Indian, and has never been, that he hoped some man would write up the Indian as he is. I think this remark applies well to the negro of the South. There is no such being in existence as the colored man that troubles the machinations of our Northern brother.

Byhalia, Miss.

E. H. RANDLE.