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UNITED STATES CONSULATE,

BORDEAUX, FRANCE, Aug. 6, 1900.

Mr F. L. Barnett,

Chicago, Ills.

My dear Sir:

I am in receipt of your letter of July 1, 1900, and am truly glad to learn of your promotion which has been well-deserved.

Upon the subject in regard to which you write, I must ask you to excuse me from making any statement or argument. All my life, since arriving at adulthood, the study of the relations of the Anglo-Saxon to the colored races of the world, especially in the United States, has been the chief and most absorbing of that life. I have not contented myself with discussing theories, but have observed for myself. Not an condition which had developed since I first saw with amazement and horror, Christian Slavery on American soil, has escaped my personal scrutiny. I was ~~was~~ one of those who believed that the fall of slavery was the end of the discordant race-relations. I was amazed that it did not. To me it seemed incredible that the destruction of the legal estate of bondage, should not mean the establishment, assertion and protection of equal right, privilege, and opportunity. "With malice toward none and with charity for all" I sought to stem the rising tide of repression, retrocession, denial and deprivation of equal right to the colored man. I might as well have tried to stem Niagara with a straw. After that was shown to be an accomplished fact, I was one of those who believed that intelligence, christianity, patriotism and devotion of the colored people to a higher ideal of duty and manhood would prepare the way--a peaceful way, worthy of both Christianity and civilization, for the establishment of justice and equal right for all.

Yesterday there came to me the adoption of the constitutional amendment in North Carolina. For a few days there will be seen here and there a little quiver of excitement at its gross injustice. There will be some newspaper law exploiting its violation of the Federal constitution. The editorial wiseacres do not realize three things:

1--That the Supreme Court of the United States, consistent with all its history as opposed to the liberty of the individual and filled with blind devotion to the supremacy of State control and delimitation of the rights of the citizen, has already gnawed away the substance of those amendments inspired by the rude experience of war, leaving only the shell to blight the hope of those who looked to the for liberty and equal rights for all.

2--That there is no considerable element of the white people of the United States who desire the civil, political or industrial liberty and equality of the colored race in the United States.

3--That there is no such community or intensity of sentiment among the colored people of the United States as is absolutely essential to impress any considerable element of the white people with the duty or policy of doing justice to them.

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Without such sentiment no legislation or executive action of any national party can improve present conditions. Indeed, it is doubtful if judicial construction has not so tied the hands of Congress that no majority however great and however desirous of doing justice could improve present conditions.

The fallacy that it is the ignorance of the colored man that inspires the denial of personal rights and inflames the white man to a murderous frenzy against him, or that wealth and intelligence would appease his thirst for colored blood is so absurd that I can hardly believe that just twenty-five years ago, I gave it my unqualified support and urged in "A Fool's Errand", these words:

"The remedy for darkness is light; for ignorance, knowledge; for wrong, righteousness."

"Make the spelling-book the symbol of National power."

I am not ashamed that I believed in the potency of this remedy. It is the undeniable proof of the charity which has been the vital impulse of my thought since God put upon me a part of this burden which the American people have sought to discard--have discarded until the same mysterious Power which wrought the overthrow of the legal estate of slavery in a way they could not, shall compel them in some equally mysterious way to supplement the abolition of Slavery with the establishment of liberty and equal right for all. How, it will be done, I do not know. That it will be done, I do not doubt. That "wealth and intelligence" will never effect it, is now perfectly apparent to any honest man who will study conditions not blinded by a load of preconceived theories. (Such as Prof. Shaler is carrying around, not to remedy evil but to excuse it.)

If every colored person in the United States, male and female, of twenty-one years old and upward, were able to pass an examination for the degree of A.B. in any University in the United States or elsewhere; had an average wealth greater than that of the white people of any State and was absolutely without fault before the law this day, the relation between the white and colored types in the United States would be no better and might be even worse than they are now.

The colored man has been disfranchised throughout the Southern States.

He has been deprived, in one way and another of that protection of person and property which constitute liberty.

Not one out of ten thousand white murderers who kill colored men suffers the penalty of the law.

Not one white man who violates colored womanhood, suffers any punishment therefor.

Christianity has separated the Church into "White" and "Black." Instead of trial by jury, lynch-law has become the rule.

The "Jim Crow Car" has become an established institution in all the states of the South.

That it will be followed by other more oppressive and restrictive institutions, no reasonable man who studies the course of repressive legislation since the close of the War of Secession can doubt.

Against these tendencies what reactionary or reformatory force exists in any part of the country?

A few churches or rather a few ministers--do a little, a very little feeble protesting. Others do some vigorous and impassioned

justification. Christianity is on both sides as it has always been since the black man came to disturb the peace of the church by his absurd demand for the application of the christian ethic to the "colored brother."

The colored people--dazed, blinded, confused, deceived, is it any wonder that they have lost heart and hope? That they have not thus far developed that passionate love for freedom which makes liberty the central thought of religion and is the only impulse yet known by which a people secures equal liberty with others.

"Science," that form of self-inflated thought which degrades manhood, and conditions the Almighty by formulating all powerful material conditions, has formulated a "gold-cure" for injustice as well as drunkenness. The trouble with it is that it applies only to the victim of wrong, not to his oppressors.

Under these circumstances you wish me to discuss some hypothetical reason some one has put forth why in certain States the white man

Disfranchises,
Lynches,
Ignores,
and Oppresses,
the colored man?

There is ~~nothing~~ answer.

There is nothing to prevent.

No law, no party, no public sentiment.

I have no doubt that God will find a way to cure this awful wrong--the worst offshoot of slavery. How will it be done? I know not.

When? Certainly not until the colored people of the United States have developed the same passion for Justice that their fathers displayed for Liberty. Not until every service in every "colored church, palpitates with the impassioned demand for Justice before the law, equal rights as men and equal opportunity as doers of the world's work--not until that time and it may be long afterwards--will the power that rules on earth, through human instrumentalities and by the operation of human motives, find a way to do what the dominant ideal of my generation was too weak to accomplish and which your race has, thus far, proved itself incapable of rightly demanding.

Apparently, it must come whenever it does come, through some ~~effective~~ effective appeal to the brain and conscience either of ALL the white people of the United States or of a portion of them united with practically all the colored people, in some supreme effort for justice. That will move to such action, no man knoweth. But this we do know--that in all history no forward step has been taken towards justice or liberty along the lines of the Men of any age have marked out, but only in answer to the cry of the weak, the poor and the oppressed.

God found a way to overthrow Christian Slavery in the United States. The church was divided. The government was powerless. Party-purpose was vain. The Supreme Court had just rivetted the chains upon the slave. Legislation was barred. There was no hope. Many denounced God and the American people in a breath. Others declared that only in this way or that was progress possible. But there were

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three millions of slaves who besought God for liberty. There were other millions of white men whose hearts echoed day and night with the same prayer--the same intense desire.

I will not say God heard. But a way was found; a way no man had looked for, a way no wisdom had marked out. It was not the result of argument or theory. It did not come through legislation. No court ordered it. No President declared in its favor. Only the madness of those who sought to perpetuate slavery based on race distinctions--on the color of the skin alone--only their madness made possible the overthrow of the institution they sought to perpetuate as a part of American civilization and American Christianity. No man laid the plans; no man foretold or could have foretold the method of its execution.

Who did it? We say it was God. There are thousand who do not doubt it was the devil's work. There are millions more who do not care whether God or devil did it. One truth remains at the bottom of it all. Had it not been that by some mysterious influence Slavery was made the enemy of the Nation and millions thereby moved to work its destruction, there is no reason to believe it would not have been to-day the dominating power of the Republic. As it was the madness of those who sought to perpetuate "the sum of all villainies" that worked its destruction, so perhaps the horror of what is done, the woefulness of what is suffered and the fear of what may be attempted, will some day bring the American Negro's withers until the hope of liberty shall fill his soul and echo in his prayer as did the longing for the day of "Jubilee" in the untaught worship of his fathers whom the Christian master kept soul-blind and starved with whip and brand lest he should read the word of God.

When that time shall come, Civilization will hear; Christianity will hear; God's will will again be done and the Negro, the Freedom, in the United States of America will be free, equal in Right and Opportunity. There may be rich negroes; there may be learned Negroes, but until some enlightening miracle or some soul-thrilling horror shall again stir the heart of Christendom and shame the pretensions of Civilization, the of the colored man as a component part of American life will be no better than it is to-day and there is every prospect that it will be infinitely worse. There is no instance in history where oppression has cured itself or a people who have been been thrown down from the pinnacle of self-ruling citizens, to the level of unrepresented serfs, been restored to the position they have lost. The power that debases a people, a race, a type, never willingly lifts it up again. Oppression is an evil which is never self-curing. Slavery grew worse, harsher, more devilish and hopeless every day until the Dred Scott Case declared it irremediable, indestructible, part and parcel of the Constitution on which the Nation's existence depended. Then its doom was sealed. The counter-currents of human nature bore it to swift destruction.

To-day, one half the people of the United States in their hearts actually and earnestly desire the repression, disfranchisement and political, industrial and social debasement of the Negro. The other half, saving a small and insignificant fraction, do not care. The Negro himself hardly realizes the gravity of his re-transformation from a

freeman to whom a Nation pledged security to a powerless atom to whom the power of the STATE strips day by day of some privilege, leaving him naked before a people who count it an inherited virtue to continue and increase his dependency and helplessness. The pride of race, the pride of history and the humiliation of defeat are all impulses prompting them to restore as near as possible the old conditions. It is not hate of the Negro but love of themselves that impels them. They would not be white men and Anglo-Saxons if it were otherwise. In the whole population there is but one element that is in earnest, and that element makes for degradation.

Half-believers, doubters, hesitant and critical, have never yet won in the struggle for liberty. The apathetic white majority of the North is not an instrument likely to achieve a fuller liberty and genuine protection and liberty for the race they have permitted to be stripped of half the rights they gave them. The Supreme Court extends the shield of its authority and the prestige of infallibility it claims over the active, earnest aggressor to-day as it did over the master's right to kill, debauch and debase the "inhabitants" of the State under the eyes of State laws only forty-odd years ago.

In my opinion, the condition of the American Negro will not improve until for years the world and God have heard his agonizing cry for justice, liberty, equal right and a freeman's opportunity--until the race has furnished martyrs by the thousand perhaps by the hundred thousand dying for liberty of action, as cheerfully as Cranmer for freedom of belief, unless God works a miracle in their behalf. He did it once but he waited two hundred and forty-seven years before putting forth His hand. The world moves fast to-day. Perhaps when the year two thousand dawns, the colored man in the United States will have regained the rights of person, the civil and political status so many thousand died to confer upon him, and which the people by the enactment of those amendments which have been nullified by legal construction, thought they were giving him. To-day is in God's hands as was Yesterday, but there is no instance in the past of his intervening for an oppressed people until they have sweat drops of blood and uttered groans of agony that have thrilled the heart of the world with pity for their woe.

Believing this, I have no more heart to argue the motives of the lyncher than I have to go back and discuss the motives of the slave-master. I do not believe the slave-owner acted from love of the slave nor that the mob-murderer acts from apprehension of the Negro's power. Both hypotheses are equally absurd, both are formulated to furnish an excuse for incalculable evil, not to repress, cure or mitigate it.

I am, dear Sir,

Very respectfully,