

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE NEW POLITICS.

#### *The New Politics for the New Negro*

The world of the future will look upon the world of today as an essentially new turning point in the path of human progress. All over the world the spirit of democratic striving is making itself felt. The new issues have brought forth new ideas of freedom, politics, industry and society at large. The new Negro living in this new world is just as responsive to these new impulses as other people are.

In the "good old days" it was quite easy to tell the Negro to follow in the footsteps of those who had gone before. The mere mention of the name Lincoln or the Republican party was sufficient to secure his allegiance to that party which had seen him stripped of all political power and of civil rights without protest—effective or otherwise.

Things are different now. The new Negro is demanding elective representation in Baltimore, Chicago and other places. He is demanding it in New York. The pith of the present occasion is, that he is no longer begging or asking. He is demanding as a right that which he is in position to enforce.

In the presence of this new demand the old political leaders are bewildered, and afraid; for the old idea of Negro leadership by virtue of the white man's selection has collapsed. The new Negro leader must be chosen by

his fellows—by those whose strivings he is supposed to represent.

Any man today who aspires to lead the Negro race must set squarely before his face the idea of "Race First" Just as the white men of these and other lands are white men before they are Christians, Anglo-Saxons or Republicans; so the Negroes of this and other lands are intent upon being Negroes before they are Christians, Englishmen, or Republicans.

Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Charity begins at home, and our first duty is to ourselves. It is not what we wish but what we must, that we are concerned with. The world, as it ought to be, is still for us, as for others, the world that does not exist. The world as it is, is the real world, and it is to that real world that we address ourselves. Striving to be men, and finding no effective aid in government or in politics, the Negro of the Western world must follow the path of the Swadesha movement of India and the Sinn Fein movement of Ireland. The meaning of both these terms is "ourselves first." This is the mental background of the new politics of the New Negro, and we commend it to the consideration of all the political parties. For it is upon this background that we will predicate such policies as shall seem to us necessary and desirable.

In the British Parliament the Irish Home Rule party clubbed its full strength and devoted itself so exclusively to the cause of Free Ireland that it virtually dictated for a time the policies of Liberals and Conservatives alike.

*The new Negro race in America will not achieve political self-respect until it is in a position to organize itself as a politically independent party and follow the example of the Irish Home Rulers. This is what will happen in American politics.*—September, 1917.

*The Drift in Politics*

The Negroes of America—those of them who think—are suspicious of everything that comes from the white people of America. They have seen that every movement for the extension of democracy here has broken down as soon as it reached the color line. Political democracy declared that “all men are created equal,” meant only all white men; the Christian church found that the brotherhood of man did not include God’s bastard children; the public school system proclaimed that the school house was the backbone of democracy—“for white people only,” and the civil service says that Negroes must keep their place—at the bottom. So that they can hardly be blamed for looking askance at any new gospel of freedom. Freedom to them has been like one of

“those juggling fiends

That palter with us in a double sense;  
That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope.”

In this connection, some explanation of the former political solidarity of those Negroes who were voters may be of service. Up to six years ago the one great obstacle to the political progress of the colored people was their sheep-like allegiance to the Republican party. They were taught to believe that God had raised up a peculiar race of men called Republicans who had loved the slaves so tenderly that they had taken guns in their hands and rushed on the ranks of the southern slaveholders to free the slaves; that this race of men was still in existence, marching under the banner of the Republican party and

showing their great love for Negroes by appointing from six to sixteen near-Negroes to soft political snaps. Today that great political superstition is falling to pieces before the advance of intelligence among Negroes. They begin to realize that they were sold out by the Republican party in 1876; that in the last twenty-five years lynchings have increased, disfranchisement has spread all over the South and "Jim-crow" cars run even into the national capitol—with the continuing consent of a Republican Congress, a Republican Supreme Court and Republican President.

Ever since the Brownsville affair, but more clearly since Taft declared and put in force the policy of pushing out the few near-Negro officeholders, the rank and file have come to see that the Republican party is a great big sham. Many went over to the Democratic party because, as the *Amsterdam News* puts it, "They had nowhere else to go." Twenty years ago the colored men who joined that party were ostracized as scalawags and crooks. But today, the defection to the Democrats of such men as Bishop Walters, Wood, Morton, Carr and Langston—whose uncle was a colored Republican Congressman from Virginia—has made the colored democracy respectable and given quite a tone to political heterodoxy.

All this loosens the bonds of their allegiance and breaks the bigotry of the last forty years. But of this change in their political view-point the white world knows nothing. The two leading Negro newspapers are subsidized by the same political pirates who own the title-deeds to the handful of hirelings holding office in the name of the Negro race. One of these papers is an organ of Mr. Washington, the other pretends to be independent—that is, it must be bought on the installment plan, and both of them are in New York. Despite this "conspiracy of silence" the Negroes are waking up, are beginning to

think for themselves, to look with more favor on "new doctrines."\*

Today the politician who wants the support of the Negro voter will have to give something more than pie-crust promises. The old professional "friend to the colored people" must have something more solid than the name of Lincoln and party appointments.

We demand what the Irish and the Jewish voter get: nominations on the party's ticket in our own districts. And if we don't get this we will smash the party that refuses to give it.

For we are not Republicans, Democrats or Socialists any longer. We are Negroes first. And we are no longer begging for sops. We demand, not "recognition," but representation, and we are out to throw our votes to *any* party which gives us this, and withhold them from any party which refuses to give it. No longer will we follow any leader whose job the party controls. For we know that no leader so controlled can oppose such party in our interests beyond a given point.

That is why so much interest attaches to the mass-meeting to be held at Palace Casino on the 29th where the Citizens' Committee will make its report to the Negro voters of Harlem and tell them how it was "turned down" by the local representatives of the Republican party when it begged the boon of elective representation. All such rebuffs will make for manhood—if we are men—and will drive us to play in American politics the same role which the Irish party played in British politics. That is the new trend in Negro politics, and we must not let any party forget it—1917.

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\*The first part of this editorial is reprinted from an article written in 1912.

*A Negro for President*

For many years the Negro has been the football of American politics. Kicked from pillar to post, he goes begging, hat in hand, from a Republican convention to a Democratic one. Always is he asking some one else to do something for him. Always is he begging, pleading, demanding or threatening. In all these cases his dependence is on the good will, sense of justice or gratitude of the other fellow. And in none of these cases is the political reaction of the other fellow within the control of the Negro.

But a change for the better is approaching. Four years ago, the present writer was propounding in lectures, indoors and outdoors, the thesis that the Negro people of America would never amount to anything much politically until they should see fit to imitate the Irish of Britain and to organize themselves into a political party of their own whose leaders, on the basis of this large collective vote, could "hold up" Republicans, Democrats, Socialists or any other political group of American whites. As in many other cases, we have lived to see time ripen the fruits of our own thought for some one else to pluck. Here is the editor of the *Challenge* nucking a campaign along these very lines. His version of the idea takes the form of advocating the nomination of a Negro for the Presidency of the United States. In this form we haven't the slightest doubt that this idea will meet with a great deal of ridicule and contempt. Nevertheless, we venture to prophesy that, whether in the hands of Mr. Bridges or another, it will come to be ultimately accepted as one of the finest contributions to Negro statesmanship.

No one pretends, of course, that the votes of Negroes can elect a Negro to the high office of President of the

United States. Nor would any one expect that the votes of white people will be forthcoming to assist them in such a project. The only way in which a Negro could be elected President of the United States would be by virtue of the voters not knowing that the particular candidate was of Negro ancestry. This, we believe, has already happened within the memory of living men. But, the essential intent of this new plan is to furnish a focussing-point around which the ballots of the Negro voters may be concentrated for the realization of racial demands for justice and equality of opportunity and treatment. It would be carrying "Race First" with a vengeance into the arena of domestic politics. It would take the Negro voter out of the ranks of the Republican, Democratic and Socialist parties and would enable their leaders to trade the votes of their followers, openly and above-board, for those things for which masses of men largely exchange their votes.

Mr. Bridges will find that the idea of a Negro candidate for President presupposes the creation of a purely Negro party and upon that prerequisite he will find himself compelled to concentrate. Doubtless, most of the political wise-acres of the Negro race will argue that the idea is impossible because it antagonizes the white politicians of the various parties. They will close their eyes to the fact that politics implies antagonism and a conflict of interest. They will fail to see that the only things which count with politicians are votes, and that, just as one white man will cheerfully cut another white man's throat to get the dollars which a black man has, so will one white politician or party cut another one's throat politically to get the votes which black men may cast at the polls. But these considerations will finally carry the day. Let there be no mistake. The Negro will never be ac-

cepted by the white American democracy except in so far as he can by the use of force, financial, political or other, win, seize or maintain in the teeth of opposition that position which he finds necessary to his own security and salvation. And we Negroes may as well make up our minds now that we can't depend upon the good-will of white men in anything or at any point where our interests and theirs conflict. Disguise it as we may, in business, politics, education or other departments of life, we as Negroes are compelled to fight for what we want to win from the white world.

It is easy enough for those colored men whose psychology is shaped by their white inheritance to argue the ethics of compromise and inter-racial co-operation. But we whose brains are still unbastardized must face the frank realities of this situation of racial conflict and competition. Wherefore, it is well that we marshal our forces to withstand and make head against the constant racial pressure. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Where there is but slight pressure a slight resistance will suffice. But where, as in our case, that pressure is grinding and pitiless, the resistance that would re-establish equal conditions of freedom must of necessity be intense and radical. And it is this philosophy which must furnish the motive for such a new and radical departure as is implied in the joint idea of a Negro party in American politics and a Negro candidate for the Presidency of these United States.—June, 1920.

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### *When the Tail Wags the Dog*

Politically, these United States may be roughly divided into two sections, so far as the Negroes are concerned. In the North the Negro population has the vote. In the



South it hasn't. This was not always so. There was a time when the Negro voters of the South sent in to Congress a thin but steady stream of black men who represented their political interests directly. Due to the misadventures of the reconstruction period, this stream was shut off until at the beginning of this century George White, of North Carolina, was the sole and last representative of the black man with a ballot in the South.

This result was due largely to the characteristic stupidity of the Negro voter. He was a Republican, he was. He would do anything with his ballot for Abraham Lincoln—who was dead—but not a thing for himself and his family, who were all alive and kicking. For this the Republican party loved him so much that it permitted the Democrats to disfranchise him while it controlled Congress and the courts, the army and navy, and all the machinery of law-enforcement in the United States. With its continuing consent, Jim-crowism, disfranchisement, segregation and lynching spread abroad over the land. The end of it all was the reduction of the Negro in the South to the position of a political serf, an industrial peon and a social outcast.

Recently there has been developed in the souls of black folk a new manhood dedicated to the proposition that, if all Americans are equal in the matter of baring their breasts to foreign bayonets, then all Americans must, by their own efforts, be made equal in balloting for Presidents and other officers of the government. This principle is compelling the Republican party in certain localities to consider the necessity of nominating Negroes on its local electoral tickets. Yet the old attitude of that party on the political rights of Negroes remains substantially the same.

Here, for instance, is the Chicago convention, at which

the Negro delegates were lined up to do their duty by the party. Of course, these delegates had to deal collectively with the white leaders. This was to their mutual advantage. But the odd feature of the entire affair was this, that, *Whereas the Negro people in the South are not free to cast their votes, it was precisely from these voteless areas that the national Republican leaders selected the political spokesmen for the voting Negroes of the North.* Men who will not vote at the coming election and men who, like Roscoe Simmons, never cast a vote in their lives were the accredited representatives in whose hands lay the destiny of a million Negro voters.

But there need be no fear that this insult will annoy the black brother in the Republican ranks. A Negro Republican generally runs the rhinoceros and the elephant a close third. In plain English, the average Negro Republican is too stupid to see and too meek to mind. Then, too, here is Fate's retribution for the black man in the North who has never cared enough to fight (the Republican party) for the political freedom of his brother in the South, but left him to rot under poll-tax laws and grandfather clauses. The Northern white Democrats, for letting their Southern brethren run riot through the Constitution, must pay the penalty of being led into the ditch by the most ignorant, stupid and vicious portion of their party. Even so, the Northern Negro Republican, for letting his Southern brother remain a political ragamuffin, must now stomach the insult of this same ragamuffin dictating the destiny of the freer Negroes of the North. In both cases the tail doth wag the dog because of "the solid South." Surely, "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether!"—July, 1920.

*The Grand Old Party*

In the early days of 1861, when the Southern Senators and Representatives were relinquishing their seats in the United States Congress and hurling cartels of defiant explanation broadcast, the Republican party in Congress, under the leadership of Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts, organized a joint committee made up of thirteen members of the Senate and thirty-three members of the House to make overtures to the seceding Southerners. The result of this friendly gesture was a proposed thirteenth amendment, which, if the Southerners had not been so obstinate, would have bridged the chasm. For this amendment proposed to make the slavery of the black man in America eternal and inescapable. It provided that no amendment to the Constitution, or any other proposition affecting slavery in any way, could ever be legally presented upon the floor of Congress unless its mover had secured the previous consent of *every Senator and Representative from the slave-holding States*. It put teeth into the Fugitive Slave Law and absolutely gave the Negro over into the keeping of his oppressors.

Most Negro Americans (and white ones, too) think it fashionable to maintain the most fervid faith and deepest ignorance about points in their national history of which they should be informed. We therefore submit that these facts are open and notorious to those who know American history. The record will be found slimly and shamefacedly given in McPherson's "History of the Rebellion"; at indignant length in Blaine's "Twenty Years of Congress" and Horace Greeley's "The Great American Conflict." The document can be examined in Professor MacDonald's "Select Documents of United States History." These works are to be found in every public library, and

we refer to them here because there are "intellectual" Negroes today who are striving secretly, when they dare not do so openly, to perpetuate the bonds of serfdom which bind the Negro Americans to the Republican party. This bond of serfdom, this debt of gratitude, is supposed to hinge on the love which Abraham Lincoln and his party are supposed to have borne towards the Negro; and the object of this appeal to the historical record is to show that that record demonstrates that if the Negro owes any debt to the Republican party it is a debt of execration and of punishment rather than one of gratitude.

It is an astounding fact that in his First Inaugural Address Abraham Lincoln gave his explicit approval to the substance of the Crittenden resolutions which the joint committee referred to above had collectively taken over. This demonstrates that the Republican party at the very beginning of its contact with the Negro was willing to sell the Negro, bound hand and foot, for the substance of its own political control. This Thirteenth Amendment was adopted by six or eight Northern States, including Pennsylvania and Illinois; and if Fort Sumter had not been fired upon it would have become by State action the law of the land.

The Republican party did not fight for the freedom of the Negro, but for the maintenance of its own grip on the government which the election of Abraham Lincoln had secured. If any one wants to know for what the Republican party fought he will find it in such facts as this: That thousands of square miles of the people's property were given away to Wall Street magnates who had corrupted the Legislature in their effort to build railroads on the government's money. The sordid story is given in "Forty Years in Wall Street," by the banker, Henry

Clews, and others who took part in this raid upon the resources of a great but stupid people.

But the Civil War phase of the Republican party's treason to the Negro is not the only outstanding one, as was shown by the late General Tremaine in his "Sectionalism Unmasked." Not only was General Grant elected in 1868 by the newly created Negro vote, as the official records prove, but his re-election in 1872 was effected by the same means. So was the election of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. Yet when the election of Hayes had been taken before the overwhelmingly Republican Congress this shameless party made a deal whereby, in order to pacify the white "crackers" of the South, the Negro was given over into the hands of the triumphant Ku-Klux; the soldiers who protected their access to the ballot box in the worst southern states were withdrawn, while the "crackers" agreed as the price of this favor to withdraw their opposition to the election of Hayes. For this there exists ample proof which will be presented upon the challenge of any politician or editor. As a Republican Senator from New England shamelessly said, it was a matter of "Root, hog, or die" for the helpless Negro whose ballots had buttressed the Republican party's temple of graft and corruption. So was reconstruction settled against the Negro by the aid and abetting of the Republican party.

And since that time lynching, disfranchisement and segregation have grown with the Republican party in continuous control of the government from 1861 to 1920—with the exception of eight years of Woodrow Wilson and eight years of Grover Cleveland. With their continuing consent the South has been made solid, so that at every Republican convention delegates who do not represent a voting constituency but a grafting collection of white postmasters and their Negro lackeys can turn

the scales of nomination in favor of any person whom the central clique of the party, controlled as it has always been by Wall Street financiers, may foist upon a disgusted people, as they have done in the case of Harding. So long as the South remains solid, so long will the Republican delegates from the South consist of only this handful of hirelings; so long will they be amenable to the "discipline" which means the pressure of the jobs by which they get their bread. Therefore the Republican leaders will know that the solidarity of the South is their most valuable asset; and they are least likely to do anything that will break that solidarity. The Republican party's only interest in the Negro is to get his vote for nothing; and so long as Negro Republican leaders remain the contemptible grafters and political procurers that they are at present, so long will it get Negro votes for nothing.

Through it all the Republican party remains the most corrupt influence among Negro Americans. It buys up by jobs, appointments and gifts those Negroes who in politics should be the free and independent spokesmen of Negro Americans. But worse than this is its private work in which it secretly subsidizes men who pose before the public as independent radicals. These intellectual pimps draw private supplementary incomes from the Republican party to sell out the influence of any movement, church or newspaper with which they are connected. Of the enormity of this mode of procedure and the extent to which it saps the very springs of Negro integrity the average Negro knows nothing. Its blighting, baleful influence is known only to those who have trained ears to hear and trained eyes to see.

And now in this election the standards will advance and the cohorts go forward under the simple impulse of the same corrupting influence. But whether the new move-

ment for a Negro party comes to a head or not, the new Negro in America will never amount to anything politically until he enfranchises himself from the Grand Old Party which has made a political joke of him.—July, 1920.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### EDUCATION AND THE RACE.

[With most of the present sources of power controlled by the white race it behooves my race as well as the other subject races to learn the wisdom of the weak and to develop to the fullest that organ whereby weakness has been able to overcome strength; namely, the intellect. It is not with our teeth that we will tear the white man out of our ancestral land. It isn't with our jaws that we can ring from his hard hands consideration and respect. It must be done by the upper and not by the lower parts of our heads. Therefore, I have insisted ever since my entry into the arena of racial discussion that we Negroes must take to reading, study and the development of intelligence as we have never done before. In this respect we must pattern ourselves after the Japanese who have gone to school to Europe but have never used Europe's education to make them the apes of Europe's culture. They have absorbed, adopted, transformed and utilized, and we Negroes must do the same. The three editorials in this chapter and the article which follows them were written to indicate from time to time the duty of the transplanted African in this respect.]

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#### *Reading for Knowledge.*

Some time ago we wrote an editorial entitled "Read, Read, Read!" We touch upon the same subject again, because in our recent trip to Washington we found thousands of people who are eager to get in touch with the stored-up knowledge which the books contain, but do not know just where to turn for it. In New York the same situation obtains, and no help is afforded by the papers of our race.

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The reason is that some of our newspaper editors don't read and don't know beans themselves. James W. Johnson is one of the notable exceptions. We were cheered up a good deal by noting his recent editorial advice to our "leaders" to read Arthur Henderson's "The Aims of Labor." But that was six months after the editor of *The Voice* had been telling thousands of the "led" all about it and about the British Labor Party and the Russian Bolsheviki in his outdoor talks in Harlem.

But there is no doubt that the New Negro is producing a New Leadership and that this new leadership will be based not upon the ignorance of the masses, but upon their intelligence. The old leadership was possible partly because the masses were ignorant. Today the masses include educated laymen who have studied science, theology, history and economics, not, perhaps in college but, nevertheless, deeply and down to date. These young men and women are not going to follow fools and, indeed, are not going to follow *any one*, blindly. They want a reason for the things that they are asked to do and to respect. The others, the so-called Common People, are beginning to read and understand. As we sat in the great John Wesley A. M. E. Zion Church in Washington one Sunday night, and heard the cultured black minister speak to his people on literature, science, history and sociology, and yet so simply that even the dullest could catch the meat and inspiration of his great ideas, we could not help saying as we went out of the church: "Depend upon it, these people will demand as much from their next minister." In fact our race will demand as much from *all* its leaders. And they will demand no less for themselves.

So, with a glad heart, we reprint the following paragraphs from our earlier editorial trusting that our readers everywhere may find them helpful:

As a people our bent for books is not encouraging. We mostly read trash. And this is true not only of our rank and file but even of our leaders. When we heard Kelly Miller address the Sunrise Club of New York at a Broadway hotel two or three years ago, we were shocked at the ignorance of modern science and modern thought which his remarks displayed. His biology was of the brand of Pliny who lived about eighteen hundred years ago. For him Darwin and Spencer and Jacques Loeb had never existed nor written. His ignorance of the A. B. C.'s of astronomy and geology was pitiful.

If this is true of the leaders to whom our reading masses look, what can we expect from those reading masses? The masses must be taught to love good books. But to love them they must first know them. The handicaps placed on us in America are too great to allow us to ignore the help which we can get from that education which we get out of school for ourselves—the only one that is really worth while.

Without the New Knowledge the New Negro is no better than the old. And this new knowledge will be found in the books. Therefore, it would be well if every Negro of the new model were to make up his (or her) mind to get the essentials of modern science and modern thought as they are set down in the books which may be easily had. Don't talk about Darwin and Spencer: read them!

To help the good work along we append the following list of books that are essential. When you *master* these you will have a better "education" than is found in nine-tenths of the graduates of the average American college.

"Modern Science and Modern Thought," by Samuel Laing; "The Origin of Species" and "The Descent of Man," by Charles Darwin; "The Principles of Sociology"

and "First Principles," by Herbert Spencer; "The Childhood of the World" and "The Childhood of Religion," by Edward Clodd; "Anthropology," by E. B. Tylor (very easy to read and a work of standard information on Races, Culture and the origins of Religion, Art and Science); Buckle's "History of Civilization"; Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"; "The Martyrdom of Man," by Winwood Reade; the books on Africa by Livingstone and Mungo Park, and "The Mind of Primitive Man," by Franz Boas.—Sept., 1918.

### *Education and the Race.*

In the dark days of Russia, when the iron heel of Czarist despotism was heaviest on the necks of the people, those who wished to rule decreed that the people should remain ignorant. Loyalty to interests that were opposed to theirs was the prevailing public sentiment of the masses. In vain did the pioneers of freedom for the masses perish under the knout and the rigors of Siberia. They sacrificed to move the masses, but the masses, strong in their love of liberty, lacked the head to guide the moving feet to any successful issue. It was then that Leo Tolstoi and the other intelligentsia began to carry knowledge to the masses. Not only in the province of Tula, but in every large city, young men of university experience would assemble in secret classes of instruction, teaching them to read, to write, to know, to think and to love knowledge. Most of this work was underground at first. But it took. Thousands of educated persons gave themselves to this work—without pay: their only hope of reward lay in the future effectiveness of an instructed mass movement.

What were the results? As knowledge spread, enthusiasm was backed by brains. The Russian revolution

began to be sure of itself. The workingmen of the cities studied the thing that they were "up against," gauged their own weakness and strength as well as their opponents'. The despotism of the Czar could not provoke them to a mass movement before they were ready and had the means; and when at last they moved, they swept not only the Czar's regime but the whole exploiting system upon which it stood into utter oblivion.

What does this mean to the Negro of the Western world? It may mean much, or little: that depends on him. If other men's experiences have value for the New Negro Manhood Movement it will seek now to profit by them and to bottom the new fervor of faith in itself with the solid support of knowledge. The chains snap from the limbs of the young giant as he rises, stretches himself, and sits up to take notice. But let him, for his future's sake, insist on taking notice. To drop the figure of speech, we Negroes who have shown our *manhood* must back it by our *mind*. This world, at present, is a white man's world—even in Africa. We, being what we are, want to shake loose the chains of his control from our corner of it. We must either accept his domination and our inferiority, or we must contend against it. But we go up to win; and whether we carry on that contest with ballots, bullets or business, we can not win from the white man unless we know at least as much as the white man knows. For, after all, knowledge is power.

But that isn't all. What kind of knowledge is it that enables white men to rule black men's lands? Is it the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, philosophy or literature? It isn't. It is the knowledge of explosives and deadly compounds: that is chemistry. It is the knowledge which can build ships, bridges, railroads and factories: that is engineering. It is the knowledge which

harnesses the visible and invisible forces of the earth and air and water: that is science, modern science. And that is what the New Negro must enlist upon his side. Let us, like the Japanese, become a race of knowledge-getters, preserving our racial soul, but digesting into it all that we can glean or grasp, so that when Israel goes up out of bondage he will be "skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians" and competent to control his destiny.

Those who have knowledge must come down from their Sinais and give it to the common people. Theirs is the great duty to simplify and make clear, to light the lamps of knowledge that the eyes of their race may see; that the feet of their people may not stumble. This is the task of the Talented Tenth.

To the masses of our people we say: Read! Get the reading habit; spend your spare time not so much in training the feet to dance, as in training the head to think. And, at the very outset, draw the line between books of opinion and books of information. Saturate your minds with the latter and you will be forming your own opinions, which will be worth ten times more to you than the opinions of the greatest minds on earth. Go to school whenever you can. If you can't go in the day, go at night. But remember always that the best college is that on your bookshelf: the best education is that on the inside of your own head. For in this work-a-day world people ask first, not "Where were you educated?" but "What do you know?" and next, "What can you do with it?" And if we of the Negro race can master modern knowledge—the kind that counts—we will be able to win for ourselves the priceless gifts of freedom and power, and we will be able to hold them against the world.

*The Racial Roots of Culture.*

Education is the name which we give to that process by which the ripened generation brings to bear upon the rising generation the stored-up knowledge and experience of the past and present generations to fit it for the business of life. If we are not to waste money and energy, our educational systems should shape our youth for what we intend them to become.

We Negroes, in a world in which we are the under dog, must shape our youth for living in such a world. Shall we shape them mentally to accept the status of under-dog as their predestined lot? Or shall we shape them into men and women fit for a free world? To do the former needs nothing more than continuing as we are. To do the latter is to shape their souls for continued conflict with a theory and practice in which most of the white world that surrounds them are at one.

The educational system in the United States and the West Indies was shaped by white people for white youth, and from their point of view, it fits their purpose well. Into this system came the children of Negro parents when chattel slavery was ended—and their relation to the problems of life was obviously different. The white boy and girl draw exclusively from the stored-up knowledge and experience of the past and present generations of white people to fit them for the business of being dominant whites in a world full of colored folk. The examples of valor and virtue on which their minds are fed are exclusively white examples. What wonder, then, that each generation comes to maturity with the idea imbedded in its mind that only white men are valorous and fit to rule and only white women are virtuous and entitled to chivalry, respect and protection? What wonder that they

think, almost instinctively, that the Negro's proper place, nationally and internationally, is that of an inferior? It is only what we should naturally expect.

But what seems to escape attention is the fact that the Negro boy and girl, getting the same (though worse) instruction, also get from it the same notion of the Negro's place and part in life which the white children get. Is it any wonder, then, that they so readily accept the status of inferiors; that they tend to disparage themselves, and think themselves worth while only to the extent to which they look and act and think like the whites? They know nothing of the stored-up knowledge and experience of the past and present generations of Negroes in their ancestral lands, and conclude there is no such store of knowledge and experience. They readily accept the assumption that Negroes have never been anything but slaves and that they never had a glorious past as other fallen peoples like the Greeks and Persians have. And this despite the mass of collected testimony in the works of Barth, Schweinfurth, Mary Kingsley, Lady Lugard, Morel, Ludolphus, Blyden, Ellis, Ratzel, Kidd, Es-Saadi, Casely Hayford and a host of others, Negro and white.

A large part of the blame for this deplorable condition must be put upon the Negro colleges like Howard, Fisk, Livingstone and Lincoln in the United States, and Cudrington, Harrison and the Mico in the West Indies. These are the institutions in which our cultural ideals and educational systems are fashioned for the shaping of the minds of the future generations of Negroes. It cannot be expected that it shall begin with the common schools; for, in spite of logic, educational ideas and ideals spread from above downwards. If we are ever to enter into the confraternity of colored peoples it should seem the duty of our Negro colleges to drop their silly smat-

terings of "little Latin and less Greek" and establish modern courses in Hausa and Arabic, for these are the living languages of millions of our brethren in modern Africa. Courses in Negro history and the culture of West African peoples, at least, should be given in every college that claims to be an institution of learning for Negroes. Surely an institution of learning for Negroes should not fail to be also an institution of Negro learning.

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### *The New Knowledge for the New Negro.*

Quite a good deal of unnecessary dispute has been going on these days among the guardians of the inner temple as to just which form of worship is necessary at the shrine of the Goddess Knowledge. In plain English, the pundits seem to be at odds in regard to the kind of education which the Negro should have. Of course, it has long been known that the educational experts of white America were at odds with ours on the same subject; now, however, ours seem to be at odds among themselves.

The essence of the present conflict is not the easy distinction between "lower" and "higher" education, which really has no meaning in terms of educational principles, but it is rather "the knowledge of things" versus "the knowledge of words." The same conflict has been waged in England from the days of Huxley's youth to the later nineties when the London Board Schools were recognized and set the present standard of efficiency for the rest of England. The present form of the question is, "Shall education consist of Latin and Greek, literature and metaphysics, or of modern science, modern languages and modern thought?" The real essence of the question is whether we shall train our children to grapple effectively with the problem of life that lies before them, or to look longingly back upon the past standards of life and thought and consider themselves a special class because of this.

If education be, as we assert, a training for life, it must of course have its roots in the past. But so has the art of the



blacksmith, the tailor, the carpenter, the bookbinder or the priest. What the classicists really seek is the domination of the form, method and aim of that training by the form, methods and aims of an earlier age.

#### CLASSICS, CLERICS AND CLASS CULTURE.

Perhaps an explanation of that earlier training may serve to give the real innerness of the classicists' position so that ordinary people may understand it better than the classicists themselves seem to do. In the Middle Ages, the schools of Western Europe and the subject matter of the education given in them were based upon the Latin "disciplines." Western Europe had no literature, no learning, no science of its own. It was the church—particularly the monasteries—to which men had to go to get such training as was obtainable in a barbarous age. This training was, of course, given in the tongue of the church which was Latin, the clerical language. The contact of medieval Europeans with the dark-skinned Arabs added Greek and the knowledge of Greek literature and philosophy to the earlier medieval discipline. Imbedded in this was the substance of science nurtured by the Arabs and added to by them.

The ruling classes kept their children within the treadmill of these two literatures and languages and it came to be thought that this was the indispensable training for a gentleman. But:—  
*"Tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis."*

We are in a different age, an age in which the nation, not the church, gives training to all children, and not merely to the children of aristocrats who will grow up to do nothing. The children of the people must become the doers of all that is done in the world of tomorrow, and they must be trained for this doing. Today in England, not Oxford, the home of lost ideals, but such institutions as the University of London, are the sources of that training which gives England its physicians, surgeons, inventors, business men and artists.

#### CLASSICISTS IGNORANT OF LATIN AND GREEK.

But the noise of the classicists may be rudely stopped by merely pointing out the hollowness of their watch words. These persons would have us believe that Latin and Greek are, in their eyes, the backbone of any education that is worth while. Very well then, let us take them at their word. I make the broad assertion

that not one in one thousand of them can read a page of Greek or Latin that may be set before them. I offer to put under their noses a page of Athenaeus or Horace (to say nothing of more important classical authors) and if they should be able to read and translate it at sight I shall be genuinely surprised. Let the common reader who is a man of today make the test with this little bit of Latin verse:

*"Fixegi momentum acre perennis  
Regalique situ pyramidum altius."*

Let him ask some classicist to translate off-hand this common school boy's tag from a most popular author and note whether they can place the author or translate the lines. Here is another:

*Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,  
Tendimus in Latium.*

To speak in plain United States, when it comes to the show-down it will be found that those of us who argue in favor of the modern discipline (in so far as we have any knowledge of classical literature) know more about them than those whose sole defence they are.

It is said by the classicists that a knowledge of Latin and Greek is necessary to an adequate comprehension of the English language. But so is the knowledge of Sanscrit, Arabic, French and Italian. And when it comes to facility and clearness of expression, it will be found that Huxley's prose is superior to that of Matthew Arnold, and Brisbane's superior to that of any professor of the Latin language in Harvard or Yale. So much for the ghost fighters. *Requiescant in pace!*

#### THE KNOWLEDGE WE NEED.

Now, what is the knowledge which the New Negro needs most? He needs above all else a knowledge of the wider world and of the long past. But that is history, modern and ancient: History as written by Herodotus and John Bach McMaster; sociology not as conceived by Giddings, but as presented by Spencer and Ward, and anthropology as worked out by Huxton and Thomas. The Negro needs also the knowledge of the best thought; but that is literature as conceived, not as a collection of flowers from the tree of life, but as its garnered fruit. And, finally, the Negro needs a knowledge of his own kind, concerning which we shall have something to say later. And the pur-

poses of this knowledge? They are, to know our place in the human processus, to strengthen our minds by contact with the best and most useful thought-products evolved during the long rise of man from anthropoid to scientist; to inspire our souls and to lift our race industrially, commercially, intellectually to the level of the best that there is in the world about us. For *never until the Negro's knowledge of nitrates and engineering, of chemistry and agriculture, of history, science and business is on a level, at least, with that of the whites, will the Negro be able to measure arms successfully with them.*