

A NEW DAY AND A NEW NEGRO

The Negro people of the nation have responded so loyally and so liberally to the call of the government in the many crises of the war, there can certainly be no Americans to deny that we are living in a new day with a new type of Negro. We have long since passed the time when all Negroes may be classed as indolent, shiftless, ambitionless and more of a charge upon their communities than a benefit to them.

Formerly, in the opinion of most of the South, and many at the North, there was no good Negro except the undustrious and faithful but unthanking laborer, typified in the average wage-hand on a cotton plantation. He worked willingly and long, and did noticker about wages. His industry and little demands presented to his master something of the lordship and leisure of slavery days.

Alas, the day of this type has passed forever. In his place, a new Negro has arisen, who, even unlettered, yet understands that he is entitled to a portion of the fruits of his labor over and above his subsistence, and who is concerned with the business features of farm life.

Above this class of Negro working-man, then is the Negro farm owner and business man, who owns his farm, his business, his home; who provides his family with a comfortable home and reasonable comforts and conveniences; who educates his children; who intermingles with other leading Negroes of the state and together develop and support Negro organizations for Negro advancement. To this class of Negroes may be added Negro teachers, ministers and professional men, trained in the best schools of the country, and prepared to render their clienteles highly competent and satisfactory services.

These well-to-do Negro farm-owners, business men and professional men have been for years much resented in the South by their white brethren of similar grade. And although the lines of the two peoples rarely, if ever, crossed, there was the tensest sort of antagonism between them, and a little occasion brought about a lot of trouble at times.

The whites presumed, or said, they knew that Negroes of the thrifty class were conceited, arrogant and "felt themselves." This conclusion on the part of the whites was altogether unwarranted, as subsequent facts and experience have shown. These thrifty and intelligent Negroes have made the most congenial and satisfactory neighbors to the whites and have striven always to uphold the law wherever they have lived, because it was to their interest to do so, and because it was right.

The government, national, state and city, has found that there is a new Negro in the nation, and that this Negro can enter as largely into the spirit, responsibility and service of full citizenship as any other citizen. It will be conceded, generally, that in all the functions of citizenship, there are thousands of Negroes in every state and large city, competent to take their places and to perform. It may be added that prejudiced and discriminating whites who will admit this, will explain the denial of suffrage to this class by saying that if full citizenship were extended to these, it cannot be denied to that larger class of the shiftless and ignorant who could not grasp the sacred and lofty principles involved.

This temporizing and excusing and explaining will not satisfy the great number of thrifty and competent Negroes in American life today. Fair-minded white men will not be satisfied to deny this worthy group of good citizens the benefits and prerogatives of free government; and a great many men are thinking along this line in these days when freedom, fair play, justice and equity are on the tongues of every nation, and when these principles are announced as those for which the world is fighting.

Negro people have participated so largely in the war program, both at home and abroad, that no one doubts that the Negro will expect larger participation in the government he is serving so acceptably. To be plain, Negroes will expect to have a voice in the selection of those who are to govern them, and this can only come through the ballot. Subterfuges and dodges of one sort and another must be done away, and discriminations based solely on race must come to an end.

Governments have the right to re-

strict the exercise of the suffrage to those competent to sense and vision the grave and sacred duties of citizenship, but have no right to deny this right to those mentally and morally competent while imposing upon them the usual burdens of citizenship.

The day of peace dawns. The Negro race has largely laid aside his grievances, and has refused to give trouble, in the hour of national travail. It has been loyal, conscientious and true.

Will the nation be conscientious and true to the Negro?