

The New Southern Gentleman

By G. R. Higginyotham

The funeral dirge of the old "Southern Gentleman" was sung with the passing of Watson, Smith, Heflin, Blease, Vardeman and Small and the procession is just about over for those of the old school of "nigger" philosophy. A new "Southern Gentleman" has been ushered in with a new Negro philosophy, and greatly contrasted to that of the old southern gentleman. Realizing that the philosophy of the fathers was not sane, and, therefore, could not endure, they set themselves to the task of a new philosophy whose teaching will inevitably lead to the brotherhood of man.

The doctrine of Booker T. Washington that "you can't keep a man down in a ditch unless you stay there with him" has borne good fruit. The new and aggressive "Southern Gentleman" has dismounted his father's riding horse (the Negro) and has come out of the ditch, and as he progresses he is gradually leading the Negro out too.

I remember when the N. A. A. C. P. convention was held here about 1920, much apprehension was held for the safety of some of the speakers, especially with the new Negro and the "Southern Gentleman" sitting on the same platform. One of the southern gentlemen was greeted with boos and jeers when he made some reference to his old mammy, which was characteristic of a southern gentleman when addressing a colored audience. The Negroes wanted to know how he felt about his old mammy's children and grand children. One does not have to travel far to find that answer now. The new Southern Gentleman has awakened to his responsibility of his old mammy's children and grand children and is working to help him rise.

This summer I was greatly impressed with addresses by men like Dr. Chamlee, president of Bessie Tift College; W. D. Anderson, ex-president, Board of Regents, Atty. Phillip Weltner, member Board of Regents and Dr. Warner, pastor First Baptist Church, Forsyth, Ga. These southern gentlemen were addressing the colored teachers at the State Teachers College and some of

the things that they said are so vital to the Negro and to the community in which he lives, yet seldom mentioned by a white person, that they should be passed on. These addresses dealt with character, citizenship, education, culture and community life and each speaker emphasized the importance of giving the Negro a square deal. One can readily see the saneness of the philosophy of the new southern gentleman. At times, however, the Negro is greatly disturbed by remnants of the old southern gentleman, but they too, must soon pass into oblivion.