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SELF-HELP

AMONG NEGROES OF THE SOUTH INCREASING.

Colored Methodist Church a Great Factor, As Are Other Agencies, in Furnishing Forceful Example of Negro's Helping Himself.

(By Horace D. Slater.)

Friends of the Negro recognize that his progress since emancipation has been remarkable and attribute it to many aiding influences. Certain philanthropic agencies have contributed no little to his elevation and the amount of real help he has received from the people of the south, who have contributed so largely to the elevation of the slaves they once owned, will go down as much in favor of the Anglo-Saxon as the large amount of money spent by northern philanthropists for the same purpose.

Within the Negro race, however, there is fast growing up a division among the best people, not alone as to whether his education shall be in a large measure industrial or collegiate, but whether or not the Negro shall expend greater efforts to provide for himself all the agencies he requires for his own uplift, or depend more and more upon the help of other people. The question is frankly being asked, "Do not schools and colleges built up by the sacrifices of the Negro, mean far more in the sum total of Negro accomplishment than any number of institutions built and maintained through a system of mendicancy?"

Come those seers on one side, who say, "Press your claims upon the wealth and aristocracy of the north and build for yourselves and posterity institutions of learning whereby the Negro may become skilled artisans, efficient educators, learned ministers;" while on the other hand the sturdy sons of Dixie, though clothed in ebony, exclaim: "Learn by doing. Be instruments in your own uplift. Challenge the admiration of the gods and the aid of man by helping yourself."

It appears then, to a certain element of wise Negro leaders that the best sort of appreciation for all the aid extended to the Negro is to be manifested in this latter day inclination of the Negro to help himself. He recognizes fully his obligation to the work done by northern charitable organizations at a time when he was unable to do anything for himself, nor does he discount the great amount of financial aid he has received from the white people of the south, for in no single instance can there be cited a single church or school in a southern community that was not helped in a great degree by the white people.

Self help, however, has done wonders for the Negro. Self help has provided for him in the south institutions of learning of his own making, institutions of prominence and standing, whereby without this saving grace, he would yet be dependent upon the meagre facilities provided by the state governments. Self help has provided for him banking institutions and commercial enterprises, small when compared with similar enterprises managed by white people, but large for the youthful race of forty years' growth.

It is the spirit of the young Negro making all this progress—the new Negro—the Negro of the first and second generations removed from slavery, making the effort to produce conditions better for their posterity than they themselves found them. It is the spirit of debtors to everybody, the favored to the unfavored, the wise to the unwise, the educated to the uneducated.

Perhaps some of the most forceful examples of the inclination of the Negro of the south to help himself can be furnished in the activities of the Negroes in the Colored Methodist Episcopal church, the youngest and smallest of the three distinctively Negro churches. The Colored Methodist Episcopal church was organized in 1870 by the Methodist Episcopal church, South, from its Negro members, not for the purpose of getting rid of the Negro—which in the very nature of things would have been an impossible undertaking—but in order that the fullest good might be realized for him and his children.

These Negroes for the most part were untaught, unlettered and inexperienced, but they did have the good sense to court the advice of their white friends and choose the best among them for their leaders. The result has been a strong and influential membership, a number of well developed schools and colleges, and a ministry that has figured prominently in all affairs tending to make conditions and relations between the two people more cordial and friendly. Nearly all of their schools have received substantial aid from the white people who were members of the Methodist Episcopal church, South, which can be said of all schools and Negro charitable institutions generally.

During the past few years there were a number of meetings in various states by members of this particular organization for the purpose of raising large sums of money for missions and education. The Georgia conference under the leadership of Bishop L. H. Holsey raised in a large mass meeting more than \$5,000 for the Holsey academy, at Cordele. The two conferences in Alabama, at one meeting, under the leadership of Bishop R. S. Williams, met in Tuscaloosa in August and raised in ac-

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tual cash \$11,349. The meeting was held in a large tent and the spirit and intentions of the young Negro were manifested as much in the character of the discussions on the program as in the contributions made for education.

Another meeting on record is the great educational meeting held in Dallas, Texas, by the members of this church under the leadership of Bishop C. H. Phillips. It was the earnest effort of the Negroes in Texas to raise more money than the brethren in Alabama, and in the three days' meeting, they succeeded in raising \$11,525, all of which was contributed by Negroes except \$75, which was given by the white people of Dallas.

It was left for the Negroes in Mississippi, however, to break away from the old established order of things, and make the effort to test the real worth of the Negro by calling upon him to make for himself, with his own hands and means, an institution that would ever be a monument to the willingness of the Negro to help himself. In this undertaking, the people were led by Bishop Elias Cottrell, himself an ex-slave, but one of the most advanced representatives of the new Negro, the Negro with lofty aims and high ambitions, who is the typical product of all the Christianizing and elevating influences at work in the new south.

When Governor Vardaman's veto of the legislative appropriation made it necessary for the State Normal School at Holley Springs to close its doors within a few weeks of commencement, instead of rising up in mass meetings and heaping anathemas upon the head of their governor, under Bishop Cottrell's leadership, they set to work to rebuke him for his action in a decidedly more dangerous manner.

Without publishing it from the house, they worked steadily for five years, giving of their means as God had prospered them, and in that time had secured sufficient means to purchase more than 300 acres of land, a portion of which is within the city of Holly, and erect a magnificent school building at a cost of \$38,000.

Every cent of this money was paid in cash, and there has been erected during the past year a \$16,000 dormitory for boys, which is likewise completed without any encumbrance. Altogether the Mississippi Theological and Industrial College represents an outlay of \$75,000 all of which was given by Negroes except \$2,500, given by the white people of Holly Springs.

This accomplishment is a record breaker in this history of the Negro. For this Mississippi school they have raised on an average of \$12,000 per year, in face of the fact that while a number of them are business men,

prosperous farmers and own good homes, the majority of them receive less than six dollars per week.

While these instances are not the only ones on record, they show conclusively that the general trend of the Negro's activity in the south is in the path of efficient self help, that they mean to make conditions better and give their children an education, even if they must impose upon themselves a system of double taxation. There is hardly a good sized town in the south in which there is not some Negro high school, academy or 'college,' many of them actually laying pretensions to higher courses of study. In Mississippi, where the school facilities are very meagre, there are but few counties in which there is not a Negro institution of some kind, supported almost wholly by members of the Negro race.

Nor, is the Negro building schools and colleges alone for his elevation. In Mississippi alone he has to his credit thirteen banking institutions, and is engaged in almost every conceivable line of business. In Georgia the Negro pays taxes on \$16,000,000 worth of property, and as an example of what he is doing in Louisiana, it can be stated that in Caddo parish alone, Negroes pay taxes on \$700,000 worth of property.

Be it remembered that it is the young Negro that is making this progress. It is the Negro who has taken advantage of the school facilities afforded him by the agencies heretofore mentioned, that is in turn building other institutions of learning, manning commercial enterprises and establishing banks and co-operative concerns. All his activities along these lines are the results of the aspirations of the educated, just as the same amount of constructive work among the white people is the result of the aspirations of their educated. It is due to his education and training that the Negro has certain aspirations, the same aspirations—if you please—as the educated young white man, and it is strange? He lives under the same conditions, studies the same books, obeys the same laws.

For these reasons and because of certain prescriptive measures, the Negro becomes more and more class-conscious in the purchase of his commodities, and along limited business lines his progress is keeping pace with his educational advancement. The real white man of the south thinks he knows the Negro, but the truth is that he does not. He might live in the same block with a self-respecting, law-abiding Negro and know practically nothing about him. The Negro in question is unobtrusive, following the even tenor of his own way, and in making up the sum total of Negro accomplishment is invariably left out of the calculation, forgotten or unnoticed in the noise and

guffaw of the hoodlum element.

The strongest agency in the Negro's uplift is the church. In the light of his intensely emotional nature it is fitting that much of his progress should be wrought out through that agency. As crude and unintelligent as much of his church worship has been, the fact remains that much of his development is due to the church. He recognizes his obligation in this regard, and is providing better houses of worship, paying his ministers better salaries, and demanding a trained and educated pulpit. Christianity and education go hand in hand. The church working for the school, and the school for the church give to the Negro a development of soul and brain that can not but have a two-fold influence upon his career.

Another instance of the Negro's recognition of the efficiency of self-help is shown in the persistence of his efforts to put down crime among the ignorant and vicious. This, of course, is a difficult undertaking, and too much is expected of him in this matter. The leaders of the people and the good citizens among them are as far removed from their criminal element as the corresponding element of white people are from white criminals. The leaders of the Negroes have no coercive influence over their criminals who only show fear on the appearance of white faces in blue coats. Negro criminals do the race more harm than all the schools can counteract, for the reason that their actions furnish good copy for papers and the people want the news. The effort is being made, however, to so train the young that they will have a perfect knowledge of their duty to mankind, and that their children may be God-fearing, upright citizens.

White men everywhere must help more. The white man owes a duty to the Negro that is not wholly an unselfish one. In no instance must

the best white people in the south permit the mistaken idea to gain currency that Negro education must be restricted. Life is not likely to be made too fine. Men are not likely to be made too good, to be lifted too high. It is the purpose of education to free men from crime, from narrow conceptions, from folly and vice. It is the end of education to give men certain lofty aims and ambitions, certain conceptions of character, certain ideals of honesty. These the Negro must have before he can attain his fullest growth.

The hope of the south rests in the Christian education of all its people, and it is much to the interest of the south that the Negro who tills its fields, works around its houses, cleans its offices and banks, should be trained and honest. Inasmuch as in the days of Lincoln, this country could not exist half free and half slave, neither can it now exist one part refined, educated, law-abiding; the other ignorant, vicious, criminal, poverty-stricken. Man's duty to man orders the highest training for all men; man's duty to God directs that the greatest efforts shall be expended for the weakest individual. The Negro must more and more be placed in the path of honorable and efficacious self-help.

The absent-minded professor returned home one evening, and, after ringing his front door bell for some time to no effect, heard the muffled voice from the second-story window.

"The professor is not in."
"All right," quietly answered the professor; "I'll call again."

And he hobbled down the stone steps.—Lippincott's Magazine.

"You ought to save money for your family."
"Yes, but—"
"But what?"
"My family won't let me."—Cleveland Leader.

DON'T NEGLECT YOUR EYES

The bright rays of the Summer's Sun is trying to the eye and slight defects of vision will grow rapidly worse. You cannot afford to neglect so important an organ as the eye. You can get along very well with a wooden leg or false teeth, but there is no substitute for the natural eye. Especially should the eyes of the young be looked after carefully. It costs nothing to have the eye examined by us. Trust none but the most CAREFUL and SKILLFUL optician. Travelling spectacle vendors not only will probably not help you, but will probably do you harm.

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