

THE NEW NEGRO.

A negro preacher in Atlanta has been indulging in some very plain talk to his race. His name is John A. Davis, Presiding Elder of the Atlanta District of the African Methodist Church. He declares that the average negro of the present generation is "a lawless character, immoral and reckless, who has respect neither for the rights of man on earth, nor for the authority of God in heaven." Among other things he declares:

"This is my thirtieth year as a preacher. I am 61 years old. My word for it, I have seen both the old and the new negro. The tactics and procedure of the negro is destroying him. His reckless disregard for moral purity, a disposition to ignore the church and the gospel, to live for a life of ease and pleasure, ignorant and malicious disregard for the laws of God and the rights of man, that is daily being practiced by a majority of the race and convinces me beyond a doubt that the new negro is a lawless being and he is a liar if he says he is not.

"The negro preacher must countenance wrong living, wrong action, and almost indorse crime to be permitted to preach to this new negro. A decent preacher is denounced if he attempts to advise and instruct as relates to the inner life and plead for chastity of women and purity in the life and thought of men.

"It is not the white man's prejudice, lynching or mistreatment of the negro that will destroy him half as fast as his bad conduct and habits and love of immorality."

This is a severe arraignment of the negro by a negro, and those who know the facts know that there is much truth in it. Among the younger generation of negroes there is a growing disposition to shirk honest labor, to live in idleness which leads to crime and to easily yield to immoral influences. Never before was there such opportunity for general employment or a greater demand for labor, yet in face of these facts the number of idle negroes seems to be growing.

Credit, however, should be given those negroes who are industrious and law-abiding, and there are many such. Much if not most of the hard labor, such as railroad construction, ditching, dirt digging, sewer laying, rock breaking, hod carrying, phosphate mining, railroad section work, furnace labor, etc., is performed by negroes. Most of the washing, scrubbing and cooking is done by negro women. There are many industrious negro farmers, and in the cotton and rice fields, in the turpentine orchards, lumber mills and logging camps the negro is the chief laborer, as a rule. Many millions in property have been accumulated by the negroes and the number who own their homes is increasing. There are negro ministers who have the courage and good sense to speak plainly to their people and to give them sound advice. There are negro preachers in Nashville who assure The American that they make a practice of impressing upon their hearers the value and importance of industry and morality and the sacredness of contracts.

Let us give the negro credit for what he has done and is doing, and let us remember his inherent disadvantages and weaknesses, running through the centuries. But we may do this while condemning the faults he can easily remedy and insisting that the idle and the vicious, the immoral and the dishonest, of whom there are too many, shall be punished or made to work. The Atlanta preacher is right. The negro is his own worst enemy. If he is not saved against himself he is lost. The degenerates make the trouble, encourage race enmity and create antagonisms that are dangerous to the race.