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Title: Darkwater

Voices From Within The Veil

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Release Date: February 28, 2005 [EBook #15210]

Language: English

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DARKWATER

Voices from within the Veil

W.E.B. DU BOIS

Originally published in 1920 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York.

AD NINAM

May 12, 1896

POSTSCRIPT

These are the things of which men think, who live: of their own selves

and the dwelling place of their fathers; of their neighbors; of work and

service; of rule and reason and women and children; of Beauty and Death

and War. To this thinking I have only to add a point of view: I have

been in the world, but not of it. I have seen the human drama from a

veiled corner, where all the outer tragedy and comedy have reproduced

themselves in microcosm within. From this inner torment of souls the

human scene without has interpreted itself to me in unusual and even

illuminating ways. For this reason, and this alone, I venture to write

again on themes on which great souls have already said greater words, in

the hope that I may strike here and there a half-tone, newer even if

slighter, up from the heart of my problem and the problems of my people.

Between the sterner flights of logic, I have sought to set some little

alightings of what may be poetry. They are tributes to Beauty, unworthy

to stand alone; yet perversely, in my mind, now at the end, I know not

whether I mean the Thought for the Fancy--or the Fancy for the Thought,

or why the book trails off to playing, rather than standing strong on

unanswering fact. But this is alway--is it not?--the Riddle of Life.

Many of my words appear here transformed from other publications and I

thank the \_Atlantic\_, the \_Independent\_, the \_Crisis\_, and the \_Journal

of Race Development\_ for letting me use them again.

W.E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS.

New York, 1919.

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\_Credo\_

I believe in God, who made of one blood all nations that on earth do

dwell. I believe that all men, black and brown and white, are brothers,

varying through time and opportunity, in form and gift and feature, but

differing in no essential particular, and alike in soul and the

possibility of infinite development.

Especially do I believe in the Negro Race: in the beauty of its genius,

the sweetness of its soul, and its strength in that meekness which shall

yet inherit this turbulent earth.

I believe in Pride of race and lineage and self: in pride of self so

deep as to scorn injustice to other selves; in pride of lineage so great

as to despise no man's father; in pride of race so chivalrous as neither

to offer bastardy to the weak nor beg wedlock of the strong, knowing

that men may be brothers in Christ, even though they be not

brothers-in-law.

I believe in Service--humble, reverent service, from the blackening of

boots to the whitening of souls; for Work is Heaven, Idleness Hell, and

Wage is the "Well done!" of the Master, who summoned all them that labor

and are heavy laden, making no distinction between the black, sweating

cotton hands of Georgia and the first families of Virginia, since all

distinction not based on deed is devilish and not divine.

I believe in the Devil and his angels, who wantonly work to narrow the

opportunity of struggling human beings, especially if they be black; who

spit in the faces of the fallen, strike them that cannot strike again,

believe the worst and work to prove it, hating the image which their

Maker stamped on a brother's soul.

I believe in the Prince of Peace. I believe that War is Murder. I

believe that armies and navies are at bottom the tinsel and braggadocio

of oppression and wrong, and I believe that the wicked conquest of

weaker and darker nations by nations whiter and stronger but foreshadows

the death of that strength.

I believe in Liberty for all men: the space to stretch their arms and

their souls, the right to breathe and the right to vote, the freedom to

choose their friends, enjoy the sunshine, and ride on the railroads,

uncursed by color; thinking, dreaming, working as they will in a kingdom

of beauty and love.

I believe in the Training of Children, black even as white; the leading

out of little souls into the green pastures and beside the still waters,

not for pelf or peace, but for life lit by some large vision of beauty

and goodness and truth; lest we forget, and the sons of the fathers,

like Esau, for mere meat barter their birthright in a mighty nation.

Finally, I believe in Patience--patience with the weakness of the Weak

and the strength of the Strong, the prejudice of the Ignorant and the

ignorance of the Blind; patience with the tardy triumph of Joy and the

mad chastening of Sorrow.

I

THE SHADOW OF YEARS

I was born by a golden river and in the shadow of two great hills, five

years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The house was quaint, with

clapboards running up and down, neatly trimmed, and there were five

rooms, a tiny porch, a rosy front yard, and unbelievably delicious

strawberries in the rear. A South Carolinian, lately come to the

Berkshire Hills, owned all this--tall, thin, and black, with golden

earrings, and given to religious trances. We were his transient tenants

for the time.

My own people were part of a great clan. Fully two hundred years before,

Tom Burghardt had come through the western pass from the Hudson with his

Dutch captor, "Coenraet Burghardt," sullen in his slavery and achieving

his freedom by volunteering for the Revolution at a time of sudden

alarm. His wife was a little, black, Bantu woman, who never became

reconciled to this strange land; she clasped her knees and rocked and

crooned:

"Do bana coba--gene me, gene me!

Ben d'nuli, ben d'le--"

Tom died about 1787, but of him came many sons, and one, Jack, who

helped in the War of 1812. Of Jack and his wife, Violet, was born a

mighty family, splendidly named: Harlow and Ira, Cloë, Lucinda, Maria,

and Othello! I dimly remember my grandfather, Othello,--or "Uncle

Tallow,"--a brown man, strong-voiced and redolent with tobacco, who sat

stiffly in a great high chair because his hip was broken. He was

probably a bit lazy and given to wassail. At any rate, grandmother had a

shrewish tongue and often berated him. This grandmother was Sarah--"Aunt

Sally"--a stern, tall, Dutch-African woman, beak-nosed, but

beautiful-eyed and golden-skinned. Ten or more children were theirs, of

whom the youngest was Mary, my mother.

Mother was dark shining bronze, with a tiny ripple in her black hair,

black-eyed, with a heavy, kind face. She gave one the impression of

infinite patience, but a curious determination was concealed in her

softness. The family were small farmers on Egremont Plain, between Great

Barrington and Sheffield, Massachusetts. The bits of land were too small

to support the great families born on them and we were always poor. I

never remember being cold or hungry, but I do remember that shoes and

coal, and sometimes flour, caused mother moments of anxious thought in

winter, and a new suit was an event!

At about the time of my birth economic pressure was transmuting the

family generally from farmers to "hired" help. Some revolted and

migrated westward, others went cityward as cooks and barbers. Mother

worked for some years at house service in Great Barrington, and after a

disappointed love episode with a cousin, who went to California, she met

and married Alfred Du Bois and went to town to live by the golden river

where I was born.

Alfred, my father, must have seemed a splendid vision in that little

valley under the shelter of those mighty hills. He was small and

beautiful of face and feature, just tinted with the sun, his curly hair

chiefly revealing his kinship to Africa. In nature he was a

dreamer,--romantic, indolent, kind, unreliable. He had in him the making

of a poet, an adventurer, or a Beloved Vagabond, according to the life

that closed round him; and that life gave him all too little. His

father, Alexander Du Bois, cloaked under a stern, austere demeanor a

passionate revolt against the world. He, too, was small, but squarish. I

remember him as I saw him first, in his home in New Bedford,--white hair

close-cropped; a seamed, hard face, but high in tone, with a gray eye

that could twinkle or glare.

Long years before him Louis XIV drove two Huguenots, Jacques and Louis

Du Bois, into wild Ulster County, New York. One of them in the third or

fourth generation had a descendant, Dr. James Du Bois, a gay, rich

bachelor, who made his money in the Bahamas, where he and the Gilberts

had plantations. There he took a beautiful little mulatto slave as his

mistress, and two sons were born: Alexander in 1803 and John, later.

They were fine, straight, clear-eyed boys, white enough to "pass." He

brought them to America and put Alexander in the celebrated Cheshire

School, in Connecticut. Here he often visited him, but one last time,

fell dead. He left no will, and his relations made short shrift of these

sons. They gathered in the property, apprenticed grandfather to a

shoemaker; then dropped him.

Grandfather took his bitter dose like a thoroughbred. Wild as was his

inner revolt against this treatment, he uttered no word against the

thieves and made no plea. He tried his fortunes here and in Haiti,

where, during his short, restless sojourn, my own father was born.

Eventually, grandfather became chief steward on the passenger boat

between New York and New Haven; later he was a small merchant in

Springfield; and finally he retired and ended his days at New Bedford.

Always he held his head high, took no insults, made few friends. He was

not a "Negro"; he was a man! Yet the current was too strong even for

him. Then even more than now a colored man had colored friends or none

at all, lived in a colored world or lived alone. A few fine, strong,

black men gained the heart of this silent, bitter man in New York and

New Haven. If he had scant sympathy with their social clannishness, he

was with them in fighting discrimination. So, when the white

Episcopalians of Trinity Parish, New Haven, showed plainly that they no

longer wanted black Folks as fellow Christians, he led the revolt which

resulted in St. Luke's Parish, and was for years its senior warden. He

lies dead in the Grove Street Cemetery, beside Jehudi Ashmun.

Beneath his sternness was a very human man. Slyly he wrote

poetry,--stilted, pleading things from a soul astray. He loved women in

his masterful way, marrying three beautiful wives in succession and

clinging to each with a certain desperate, even if unsympathetic,

affection. As a father he was, naturally, a failure,--hard, domineering,

unyielding. His four children reacted characteristically: one was until

past middle life a thin spinster, the mental image of her father; one

died; one passed over into the white world and her children's children

are now white, with no knowledge of their Negro blood; the fourth, my

father, bent before grandfather, but did not break--better if he had. He

yielded and flared back, asked forgiveness and forgot why, became the

harshly-held favorite, who ran away and rioted and roamed and loved and

married my brown mother.

So with some circumstance having finally gotten myself born, with a

flood of Negro blood, a strain of French, a bit of Dutch, but, thank

God! no "Anglo-Saxon," I come to the days of my childhood.

They were very happy. Early we moved back to Grandfather Burghardt's

home,--I barely remember its stone fireplace, big kitchen, and

delightful woodshed. Then this house passed to other branches of the

clan and we moved to rented quarters in town,--to one delectable place

"upstairs," with a wide yard full of shrubbery, and a brook; to another

house abutting a railroad, with infinite interests and astonishing

playmates; and finally back to the quiet street on which I was

born,--down a long lane and in a homely, cozy cottage, with a

living-room, a tiny sitting-room, a pantry, and two attic bedrooms. Here

mother and I lived until she died, in 1884, for father early began his

restless wanderings. I last remember urgent letters for us to come to

New Milford, where he had started a barber shop. Later he became a

preacher. But mother no longer trusted his dreams, and he soon faded out

of our lives into silence.

From the age of five until I was sixteen I went to a school on the same

grounds,--down a lane, into a widened yard, with a big choke-cherry tree

and two buildings, wood and brick. Here I got acquainted with my world,

and soon had my criterions of judgment.

Wealth had no particular lure. On the other hand, the shadow of wealth

was about us. That river of my birth was golden because of the woolen

and paper waste that soiled it. The gold was theirs, not ours; but the

gleam and glint was for all. To me it was all in order and I took it

philosophically. I cordially despised the poor Irish and South Germans,

who slaved in the mills, and annexed the rich and well-to-do as my

natural companions. Of such is the kingdom of snobs!

Most of our townfolk were, naturally, the well-to-do, shading downward,

but seldom reaching poverty. As playmate of the children I saw the homes

of nearly every one, except a few immigrant New Yorkers, of whom none of

us approved. The homes I saw impressed me, but did not overwhelm me.

Many were bigger than mine, with newer and shinier things, but they did

not seem to differ in kind. I think I probably surprised my hosts more

than they me, for I was easily at home and perfectly happy and they

looked to me just like ordinary people, while my brown face and frizzled

hair must have seemed strange to them.

Yet I was very much one of them. I was a center and sometimes the leader

of the town gang of boys. We were noisy, but never very bad,--and,

indeed, my mother's quiet influence came in here, as I realize now. She

did not try to make me perfect. To her I was already perfect. She simply

warned me of a few things, especially saloons. In my town the saloon was

the open door to hell. The best families had their drunkards and the

worst had little else.

Very gradually,--I cannot now distinguish the steps, though here and

there I remember a jump or a jolt--but very gradually I found myself

assuming quite placidly that I was different from other children. At

first I think I connected the difference with a manifest ability to get

my lessons rather better than most and to recite with a certain happy,

almost taunting, glibness, which brought frowns here and there. Then,

slowly, I realized that some folks, a few, even several, actually

considered my brown skin a misfortune; once or twice I became painfully

aware that some human beings even thought it a crime. I was not for a

moment daunted,--although, of course, there were some days of secret

tears--rather I was spurred to tireless effort. If they beat me at

anything, I was grimly determined to make them sweat for it! Once I

remember challenging a great, hard farmer-boy to battle, when I knew he

could whip me; and he did. But ever after, he was polite.

As time flew I felt not so much disowned and rejected as rather drawn up

into higher spaces and made part of a mightier mission. At times I

almost pitied my pale companions, who were not of the Lord's anointed

and who saw in their dreams no splendid quests of golden fleeces.

Even in the matter of girls my peculiar phantasy asserted itself.

Naturally, it was in our town voted bad form for boys of twelve and

fourteen to show any evident weakness for girls. We tolerated them

loftily, and now and then they played in our games, when I joined in

quite as naturally as the rest. It was when strangers came, or summer

boarders, or when the oldest girls grew up that my sharp senses noted

little hesitancies in public and searchings for possible public opinion.

Then I flamed! I lifted my chin and strode off to the mountains, where I

viewed the world at my feet and strained my eyes across the shadow of

the hills.

I was graduated from high school at sixteen, and I talked of "Wendell

Phillips." This was my first sweet taste of the world's applause. There

were flowers and upturned faces, music and marching, and there was my

mother's smile. She was lame, then, and a bit drawn, but very happy. It

was her great day and that very year she lay down with a sigh of content

and has not yet awakened. I felt a certain gladness to see her, at last,

at peace, for she had worried all her life. Of my own loss I had then

little realization. That came only with the after-years. Now it was the

choking gladness and solemn feel of wings! At last, I was going beyond

the hills and into the world that beckoned steadily.

There came a little pause,--a singular pause. I was given to understand

that I was almost too young for the world. Harvard was the goal of my

dreams, but my white friends hesitated and my colored friends were

silent. Harvard was a mighty conjure-word in that hill town, and even

the mill owners' sons had aimed lower. Finally it was tactfully

explained that the place for me was in the South among my people. A

scholarship had been already arranged at Fisk, and my summer earnings

would pay the fare. My relatives grumbled, but after a twinge I felt a

strange delight! I forgot, or did not thoroughly realize, the curious

irony by which I was not looked upon as a real citizen of my birth-town,

with a future and a career, and instead was being sent to a far land

among strangers who were regarded as (and in truth were) "mine own

people."

Ah! the wonder of that journey, with its faint spice of adventure, as I

entered the land of slaves; the never-to-be-forgotten marvel of that

first supper at Fisk with the world "colored" and opposite two of the

most beautiful beings God ever revealed to the eyes of seventeen. I

promptly lost my appetite, but I was deliriously happy!

As I peer back through the shadow of my years, seeing not too clearly,

but through the thickening veil of wish and after-thought, I seem to

view my life divided into four distinct parts: the Age of Miracles, the

Days of Disillusion, the Discipline of Work and Play, and the Second

Miracle Age.

The Age of Miracles began with Fisk and ended with Germany. I was

bursting with the joy of living. I seemed to ride in conquering might. I

was captain of my soul and master of fate! I \_willed\_ to do! It was

done. I \_wished!\_ The wish came true.

Now and then out of the void flashed the great sword of hate to remind

me of the battle. I remember once, in Nashville, brushing by accident

against a white woman on the street. Politely and eagerly I raised my

hat to apologize. That was thirty-five years ago. From that day to this

I have never knowingly raised my hat to a Southern white woman.

I suspect that beneath all of my seeming triumphs there were many

failures and disappointments, but the realities loomed so large that

they swept away even the memory of other dreams and wishes. Consider,

for a moment, how miraculous it all was to a boy of seventeen, just

escaped from a narrow valley: I willed and lo! my people came dancing

about me,--riotous in color, gay in laughter, full of sympathy, need,

and pleading; darkly delicious girls--"colored" girls--sat beside me and

actually talked to me while I gazed in tongue-tied silence or babbled in

boastful dreams. Boys with my own experiences and out of my own world,

who knew and understood, wrought out with me great remedies. I studied

eagerly under teachers who bent in subtle sympathy, feeling themselves

some shadow of the Veil and lifting it gently that we darker souls might

peer through to other worlds.

I willed and lo! I was walking beneath the elms of Harvard,--the name of

allurement, the college of my youngest, wildest visions! I needed money;

scholarships and prizes fell into my lap,--not all I wanted or strove

for, but all I needed to keep in school. Commencement came and standing

before governor, president, and grave, gowned men, I told them certain

astonishing truths, waving my arms and breathing fast! They applauded

with what now seems to me uncalled-for fervor, but then! I walked home

on pink clouds of glory! I asked for a fellowship and got it. I

announced my plan of studying in Germany, but Harvard had no more

fellowships for me. A friend, however, told me of the Slater Fund and

how the Board was looking for colored men worth educating. No thought of

modest hesitation occurred to me. I rushed at the chance.

The trustees of the Slater Fund excused themselves politely. They

acknowledged that they had in the past looked for colored boys of

ability to educate, but, being unsuccessful, they had stopped searching.

I went at them hammer and tongs! I plied them with testimonials and

mid-year and final marks. I intimated plainly, impudently, that they

were "stalling"! In vain did the chairman, Ex-President Hayes, explain

and excuse. I took no excuses and brushed explanations aside. I wonder

now that he did not brush me aside, too, as a conceited meddler, but

instead he smiled and surrendered.

I crossed the ocean in a trance. Always I seemed to be saying, "It is

not real; I must be dreaming!" I can live it again--the little, Dutch

ship--the blue waters--the smell of new-mown hay--Holland and the Rhine.

I saw the Wartburg and Berlin; I made the Harzreise and climbed the

Brocken; I saw the Hansa towns and the cities and dorfs of South

Germany; I saw the Alps at Berne, the Cathedral at Milan, Florence,

Rome, Venice, Vienna, and Pesth; I looked on the boundaries of Russia;

and I sat in Paris and London.

On mountain and valley, in home and school, I met men and women as I had

never met them before. Slowly they became, not white folks, but folks.

The unity beneath all life clutched me. I was not less fanatically a

Negro, but "Negro" meant a greater, broader sense of humanity and

world-fellowship. I felt myself standing, not against the world, but

simply against American narrowness and color prejudice, with the

greater, finer world at my back urging me on.

I builded great castles in Spain and lived therein. I dreamed and loved

and wandered and sang; then, after two long years, I dropped suddenly

back into "nigger"-hating America!

My Days of Disillusion were not disappointing enough to discourage me. I

was still upheld by that fund of infinite faith, although dimly about me

I saw the shadow of disaster. I began to realize how much of what I had

called Will and Ability was sheer Luck! \_Suppose\_ my good mother had

preferred a steady income from my child labor rather than bank on the

precarious dividend of my higher training? \_Suppose\_ that pompous old

village judge, whose dignity we often ruffled and whose apples we stole,

had had his way and sent me while a child to a "reform" school to learn

a "trade"? \_Suppose\_ Principal Hosmer had been born with no faith in

"darkies," and instead of giving me Greek and Latin had taught me

carpentry and the making of tin pans? \_Suppose\_ I had missed a Harvard

scholarship? \_Suppose\_ the Slater Board had then, as now, distinct ideas

as to where the education of Negroes should stop? Suppose \_and\_ suppose!

As I sat down calmly on flat earth and looked at my life a certain great

fear seized me. Was I the masterful captain or the pawn of laughing

sprites? Who was I to fight a world of color prejudice? I raise my hat

to myself when I remember that, even with these thoughts, I did not

hesitate or waver; but just went doggedly to work, and therein lay

whatever salvation I have achieved.

First came the task of earning a living. I was not nice or hard to

please. I just got down on my knees and begged for work, anything and

anywhere. I wrote to Hampton, Tuskegee, and a dozen other places. They

politely declined, with many regrets. The trustees of a backwoods

Tennessee town considered me, but were eventually afraid. Then,

suddenly, Wilberforce offered to let me teach Latin and Greek at $750 a

year. I was overjoyed!

I did not know anything about Latin and Greek, but I did know of

Wilberforce. The breath of that great name had swept the water and

dropped into southern Ohio, where Southerners had taken their cure at

Tawawa Springs and where white Methodists had planted a school; then

came the little bishop, Daniel Payne, who made it a school of the

African Methodists. This was the school that called me, and when

re-considered offers from Tuskegee and Jefferson City followed, I

refused; I was so thankful for that first offer.

I went to Wilberforce with high ideals. I wanted to help to build a

great university. I was willing to work night as well as day. I taught

Latin, Greek, English, and German. I helped in the discipline, took part

in the social life, begged to be allowed to lecture on sociology, and

began to write books. But I found myself against a stone wall. Nothing

stirred before my impatient pounding! Or if it stirred, it soon slept

again.

Of course, I was too impatient! The snarl of years was not to be undone

in days. I set at solving the problem before I knew it. Wilberforce was

a colored church-school. In it were mingled the problems of

poorly-prepared pupils, an inadequately-equipped plant, the natural

politics of bishoprics, and the provincial reactions of a country town

loaded with traditions. It was my first introduction to a Negro world,

and I was at once marvelously inspired and deeply depressed. I was

inspired with the children,--had I not rubbed against the children of

the world and did I not find here the same eagerness, the same joy of

life, the same brains as in New England, France, and Germany? But, on

the other hand, the ropes and myths and knots and hindrances; the

thundering waves of the white world beyond beating us back; the scalding

breakers of this inner world,--its currents and back eddies--its

meanness and smallness--its sorrow and tragedy--its screaming farce!

In all this I was as one bound hand and foot. Struggle, work, fight as I

would, I seemed to get nowhere and accomplish nothing. I had all the

wild intolerance of youth, and no experience in human tangles. For the

first time in my life I realized that there were limits to my will to

do. The Day of Miracles was past, and a long, gray road of dogged work

lay ahead.

I had, naturally, my triumphs here and there. I defied the bishops in

the matter of public extemporaneous prayer and they yielded. I bearded

the poor, hunted president in his den, and yet was re-elected to my

position. I was slowly winning a way, but quickly losing faith in the

value of the way won. Was this the place to begin my life work? Was this

the work which I was best fitted to do? What business had I, anyhow, to

teach Greek when I had studied men? I grew sure that I had made a

mistake. So I determined to leave Wilberforce and try elsewhere. Thus,

the third period of my life began.

First, in 1896, I married--a slip of a girl, beautifully dark-eyed

and thorough and good as a German housewife. Then I accepted a job to

make a study of Negroes in Philadelphia for the University of

Pennsylvania,--one year at six hundred dollars. How did I dare these

two things? I do not know. Yet they spelled salvation. To remain at

Wilberforce without doing my ideals meant spiritual death. Both my

wife and I were homeless. I dared a home and a temporary job. But it

was a different daring from the days of my first youth. I was ready

to admit that the best of men might fail. I meant still to be captain

of my soul, but I realized that even captains are not omnipotent in

uncharted and angry seas.

I essayed a thorough piece of work in Philadelphia. I labored morning,

noon, and night. Nobody ever reads that fat volume on "The Philadelphia

Negro," but they treat it with respect, and that consoles me. The

colored people of Philadelphia received me with no open arms. They had a

natural dislike to being studied like a strange species. I met again and

in different guise those curious cross-currents and inner social

whirlings of my own people. They set me to groping. I concluded that I

did not know so much as I might about my own people, and when President

Bumstead invited me to Atlanta University the next year to teach

sociology and study the American Negro, I accepted gladly, at a salary

of twelve hundred dollars.

My real life work was done at Atlanta for thirteen years, from my

twenty-ninth to my forty-second birthday. They were years of great

spiritual upturning, of the making and unmaking of ideals, of hard work

and hard play. Here I found myself. I lost most of my mannerisms. I grew

more broadly human, made my closest and most holy friendships, and

studied human beings. I became widely-acquainted with the real condition

of my people. I realized the terrific odds which faced them. At

Wilberforce I was their captious critic. In Philadelphia I was their

cold and scientific investigator, with microscope and probe. It took but

a few years of Atlanta to bring me to hot and indignant defense. I saw

the race-hatred of the whites as I had never dreamed of it

before,--naked and unashamed! The faint discrimination of my hopes and

intangible dislikes paled into nothing before this great, red monster

of cruel oppression. I held back with more difficulty each day my

mounting indignation against injustice and misrepresentation.

With all this came the strengthening and hardening of my own character.

The billows of birth, love, and death swept over me. I saw life through

all its paradox and contradiction of streaming eyes and mad merriment. I

emerged into full manhood, with the ruins of some ideals about me, but

with others planted above the stars; scarred and a bit grim, but hugging

to my soul the divine gift of laughter and withal determined, even unto

stubbornness, to fight the good fight.

At last, forbear and waver as I would, I faced the great Decision. My

life's last and greatest door stood ajar. What with all my dreaming,

studying, and teaching was I going to \_do\_ in this fierce fight? Despite

all my youthful conceit and bumptiousness, I found developed beneath it

all a reticence and new fear of forwardness, which sprang from searching

criticisms of motive and high ideals of efficiency; but contrary to my

dream of racial solidarity and notwithstanding my deep desire to serve

and follow and think, rather than to lead and inspire and decide, I

found myself suddenly the leader of a great wing of people fighting

against another and greater wing.

Nor could any effort of mine keep this fight from sinking to the

personal plane. Heaven knows I tried. That first meeting of a knot of

enthusiasts, at Niagara Falls, had all the earnestness of self-devotion.

At the second meeting, at Harper's Ferry, it arose to the solemnity of a

holy crusade and yet without and to the cold, hard stare of the world it

seemed merely the envy of fools against a great man, Booker Washington.

Of the movement I was willy-nilly leader. I hated the role. For the

first time I faced criticism and \_cared\_. Every ideal and habit of my

life was cruelly misjudged. I who had always overstriven to give credit

for good work, who had never consciously stooped to envy was accused by

honest colored people of every sort of small and petty jealousy, while

white people said I was ashamed of my race and wanted to be white! And

this of me, whose one life fanaticism had been belief in my Negro blood!

Away back in the little years of my boyhood I had sold the Springfield

\_Republican\_ and written for Mr. Fortune's \_Globe\_. I dreamed of being

an editor myself some day. I am an editor. In the great, slashing days

of college life I dreamed of a strong organization to fight the battles

of the Negro race. The National Association for the Advancement of

Colored People is such a body, and it grows daily. In the dark days at

Wilberforce I planned a time when I could speak freely to my people and

of them, interpreting between two worlds. I am speaking now. In the

study at Atlanta I grew to fear lest my radical beliefs should so hurt

the college that either my silence or the institution's ruin would

result. Powers and principalities have not yet curbed my tongue and

Atlanta still lives.

It all came--this new Age of Miracles--because a few persons in 1909

determined to celebrate Lincoln's Birthday properly by calling for the

final emancipation of the American Negro. I came at their call. My

salary even for a year was not assured, but it was the "Voice without

reply." The result has been the National Association for the Advancement

of Colored People and \_The Crisis\_ and this book, which I am finishing

on my Fiftieth Birthday.

Last year I looked death in the face and found its lineaments not

unkind. But it was not my time. Yet in nature some time soon and in the

fullness of days I shall die, quietly, I trust, with my face turned

South and eastward; and, dreaming or dreamless, I shall, I am sure,

enjoy death as I have enjoyed life.

\_A Litany at Atlanta\_

O Silent God, Thou whose voice afar in mist and mystery hath left our

ears an-hungered in these fearful days--

\_Hear us, good Lord!\_

Listen to us, Thy children: our faces dark with doubt are made a mockery

in Thy Sanctuary. With uplifted hands we front Thy Heaven, O God,

crying:

\_We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!\_

We are not better than our fellows, Lord; we are but weak and human men.

When our devils do deviltry, curse Thou the doer and the deed,--curse

them as we curse them, do to them all and more than ever they have done

to innocence and weakness, to womanhood and home.

\_Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!\_

And yet, whose is the deeper guilt? Who made these devils? Who nursed

them in crime and fed them on injustice? Who ravished and debauched

their mothers and their grandmothers? Who bought and sold their crime

and waxed fat and rich on public iniquity?

\_Thou knowest, good God!\_

Is this Thy Justice, O Father, that guile be easier than innocence and

the innocent be crucified for the guilt of the untouched guilty?

\_Justice, O Judge of men!\_

Wherefore do we pray? Is not the God of the Fathers dead? Have not seers

seen in Heaven's halls Thine hearsed and lifeless form stark amidst the

black and rolling smoke of sin, where all along bow bitter forms of

endless dead?

\_Awake, Thou that sleepest!\_

Thou art not dead, but flown afar, up hills of endless light, through

blazing corridors of suns, where worlds do swing of good and gentle men,

of women strong and free--far from the cozenage, black hypocrisy, and

chaste prostitution of this shameful speck of dust!

\_Turn again, O Lord; leave us not to perish in our sin!\_

From lust of body and lust of blood,--

\_Great God, deliver us!\_

From lust of power and lust of gold,--

\_Great God, deliver us!\_

From the leagued lying of despot and of brute,--

\_Great God, deliver us!\_

A city lay in travail, God our Lord, and from her loins sprang twin

Murder and Black Hate. Red was the midnight; clang, crack, and cry of

death and fury filled the air and trembled underneath the stars where

church spires pointed silently to Thee. And all this was to sate the

greed of greedy men who hide behind the veil of vengeance!

\_Bend us Thine ear, O Lord!\_

In the pale, still morning we looked upon the deed. We stopped our ears

and held our leaping hands, but they--did they not wag their heads and

leer and cry with bloody jaws: \_Cease from Crime!\_ The word was mockery,

for thus they train a hundred crimes while we do cure one.

\_Turn again our captivity, O Lord!\_

Behold this maimed and broken thing, dear God; it was an humble black

man, who toiled and sweat to save a bit from the pittance paid him. They

told him: \_Work and Rise!\_ He worked. Did this man sin? Nay, but someone

told how someone said another did--one whom he had never seen nor known.

Yet for that man's crime this man lieth maimed and murdered, his wife

naked to shame, his children to poverty and evil.

\_Hear us, O heavenly Father!\_

Doth not this justice of hell stink in Thy nostrils, O God? How long

shall the mounting flood of innocent blood roar in Thine ears and pound

in our hearts for vengeance? Pile the pale frenzy of blood-crazed

brutes, who do such deeds, high on Thine Altar, Jehovah Jireh, and burn

it in hell forever and forever!

\_Forgive us, good Lord; we know not what we say!\_

Bewildered we are and passion-tossed, mad with the madness of a mobbed

and mocked and murdered people; straining at the armposts of Thy throne,

we raise our shackled hands and charge Thee, God, by the bones of our

stolen fathers, by the tears of our dead mothers, by the very blood of

Thy crucified Christ: What meaneth this? Tell us the plan; give us the

sign!

\_Keep not Thou silent, O God!\_

Sit not longer blind, Lord God, deaf to our prayer and dumb to our dumb

suffering. Surely Thou, too, art not white, O Lord, a pale, bloodless,

heartless thing!

\_Ah! Christ of all the Pities!\_

Forgive the thought! Forgive these wild, blasphemous words! Thou art

still the God of our black fathers and in Thy Soul's Soul sit some soft

darkenings of the evening, some shadowings of the velvet night.

But whisper--speak--call, great God, for Thy silence is white terror to

our hearts! The way, O God, show us the way and point us the path!

Whither? North is greed and South is blood; within, the coward, and

without, the liar. Whither? To death?

\_Amen! Welcome, dark sleep!\_

Whither? To life? But not this life, dear God, not this. Let the cup

pass from us, tempt us not beyond our strength, for there is that

clamoring and clawing within, to whose voice we would not listen, yet

shudder lest we must,--and it is red. Ah! God! It is a red and awful

shape.

\_Selah!\_

In yonder East trembles a star.

\_Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord!\_

Thy Will, O Lord, be done!

\_Kyrie Eleison!\_

Lord, we have done these pleading, wavering words.

\_We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!\_

We bow our heads and hearken soft to the sobbing of women and little

children.

\_We beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord!\_

Our voices sink in silence and in night.

\_Hear us, good Lord!\_

In night, O God of a godless land!

\_Amen!\_

In silence, O Silent God.

\_Selah!\_

II

THE SOULS OF WHITE FOLK

High in the tower, where I sit above the loud complaining of the human

sea, I know many souls that toss and whirl and pass, but none there are

that intrigue me more than the Souls of White Folk.

Of them I am singularly clairvoyant. I see in and through them. I view

them from unusual points of vantage. Not as a foreigner do I come, for I

am native, not foreign, bone of their thought and flesh of their

language. Mine is not the knowledge of the traveler or the colonial

composite of dear memories, words and wonder. Nor yet is my knowledge

that which servants have of masters, or mass of class, or capitalist of

artisan. Rather I see these souls undressed and from the back and side.

I see the working of their entrails. I know their thoughts and they know

that I know. This knowledge makes them now embarrassed, now furious.

They deny my right to live and be and call me misbirth! My word is to

them mere bitterness and my soul, pessimism. And yet as they preach and

strut and shout and threaten, crouching as they clutch at rags of facts

and fancies to hide their nakedness, they go twisting, flying by my

tired eyes and I see them ever stripped,--ugly, human.

The discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very

modern thing,--a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed. The

ancient world would have laughed at such a distinction. The Middle Age

regarded skin color with mild curiosity; and even up into the eighteenth

century we were hammering our national manikins into one, great,

Universal Man, with fine frenzy which ignored color and race even more

than birth. Today we have changed all that, and the world in a sudden,

emotional conversion has discovered that it is white and by that token,

wonderful!

This assumption that of all the hues of God whiteness alone is

inherently and obviously better than brownness or tan leads to curious

acts; even the sweeter souls of the dominant world as they discourse

with me on weather, weal, and woe are continually playing above their

actual words an obligato of tune and tone, saying:

"My poor, un-white thing! Weep not nor rage. I know, too well, that the

curse of God lies heavy on you. Why? That is not for me to say, but be

brave! Do your work in your lowly sphere, praying the good Lord that

into heaven above, where all is love, you may, one day, be born--white!"

I do not laugh. I am quite straight-faced as I ask soberly:

"But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?" Then

always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to

understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and

ever, Amen!

Now what is the effect on a man or a nation when it comes passionately

to believe such an extraordinary dictum as this? That nations are coming

to believe it is manifest daily. Wave on wave, each with increasing

virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of

our time. Its first effects are funny: the strut of the Southerner, the

arrogance of the Englishman amuck, the whoop of the hoodlum who

vicariously leads your mob. Next it appears dampening generous

enthusiasm in what we once counted glorious; to free the slave is

discovered to be tolerable only in so far as it freed his master! Do we

sense somnolent writhings in black Africa or angry groans in India or

triumphant banzais in Japan? "To your tents, O Israel!" These nations

are not white!

After the more comic manifestations and the chilling of generous

enthusiasm come subtler, darker deeds. Everything considered, the title

to the universe claimed by White Folk is faulty. It ought, at least, to

look plausible. How easy, then, by emphasis and omission to make

children believe that every great soul the world ever saw was a white

man's soul; that every great thought the world ever knew was a white

man's thought; that every great deed the world ever did was a white

man's deed; that every great dream the world ever sang was a white man's

dream. In fine, that if from the world were dropped everything that

could not fairly be attributed to White Folk, the world would, if

anything, be even greater, truer, better than now. And if all this be a

lie, is it not a lie in a great cause?

Here it is that the comedy verges to tragedy. The first minor note is

struck, all unconsciously, by those worthy souls in whom consciousness

of high descent brings burning desire to spread the gift abroad,--the

obligation of nobility to the ignoble. Such sense of duty assumes two

things: a real possession of the heritage and its frank appreciation by

the humble-born. So long, then, as humble black folk, voluble with

thanks, receive barrels of old clothes from lordly and generous whites,

there is much mental peace and moral satisfaction. But when the black

man begins to dispute the white man's title to certain alleged bequests

of the Fathers in wage and position, authority and training; and when

his attitude toward charity is sullen anger rather than humble jollity;

when he insists on his human right to swagger and swear and waste,--then

the spell is suddenly broken and the philanthropist is ready to believe

that Negroes are impudent, that the South is right, and that Japan wants

to fight America.

After this the descent to Hell is easy. On the pale, white faces which

the great billows whirl upward to my tower I see again and again, often

and still more often, a writing of human hatred, a deep and passionate

hatred, vast by the very vagueness of its expressions. Down through the

green waters, on the bottom of the world, where men move to and fro, I

have seen a man--an educated gentleman--grow livid with anger because a

little, silent, black woman was sitting by herself in a Pullman car. He

was a white man. I have seen a great, grown man curse a little child,

who had wandered into the wrong waiting-room, searching for its mother:

"Here, you damned black--" He was white. In Central Park I have seen the

upper lip of a quiet, peaceful man curl back in a tigerish snarl of rage

because black folk rode by in a motor car. He was a white man. We have

seen, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable

lust of blood; mad with murder, destroying, killing, and cursing;

torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be

of the same color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color

was not white! We have seen,--Merciful God! in these wild days and in

the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood,--what have we not

seen, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder

done to men and women of Negro descent.

Up through the foam of green and weltering waters wells this great mass

of hatred, in wilder, fiercer violence, until I look down and know that

today to the millions of my people no misfortune could happen,--of death

and pestilence, failure and defeat--that would not make the hearts of

millions of their fellows beat with fierce, vindictive joy! Do you doubt

it? Ask your own soul what it would say if the next census were to

report that half of black America was dead and the other half dying.

Unfortunate? Unfortunate. But where is the misfortune? Mine? Am I, in my

blackness, the sole sufferer? I suffer. And yet, somehow, above the

suffering, above the shackled anger that beats the bars, above the hurt

that crazes there surges in me a vast pity,--pity for a people

imprisoned and enthralled, hampered and made miserable for such a cause,

for such a phantasy!

Conceive this nation, of all human peoples, engaged in a crusade to

make the "World Safe for Democracy"! Can you imagine the United States

protesting against Turkish atrocities in Armenia, while the Turks are

silent about mobs in Chicago and St. Louis; what is Louvain compared

with Memphis, Waco, Washington, Dyersburg, and Estill Springs? In short,

what is the black man but America's Belgium, and how could America

condemn in Germany that which she commits, just as brutally, within her

own borders?

A true and worthy ideal frees and uplifts a people; a false ideal

imprisons and lowers. Say to men, earnestly and repeatedly: "Honesty is

best, knowledge is power; do unto others as you would be done by." Say

this and act it and the nation must move toward it, if not to it. But

say to a people: "The one virtue is to be white," and the people rush to

the inevitable conclusion, "Kill the 'nigger'!"

Is not this the record of present America? Is not this its headlong

progress? Are we not coming more and more, day by day, to making the

statement "I am white," the one fundamental tenet of our practical

morality? Only when this basic, iron rule is involved is our defense of

right nation-wide and prompt. Murder may swagger, theft may rule and

prostitution may flourish and the nation gives but spasmodic,

intermittent and lukewarm attention. But let the murderer be black or

the thief brown or the violator of womanhood have a drop of Negro blood,

and the righteousness of the indignation sweeps the world. Nor would

this fact make the indignation less justifiable did not we all know that

it was blackness that was condemned and not crime.

In the awful cataclysm of World War, where from beating, slandering, and

murdering us the white world turned temporarily aside to kill each

other, we of the Darker Peoples looked on in mild amaze.

Among some of us, I doubt not, this sudden descent of Europe into hell

brought unbounded surprise; to others, over wide area, it brought the

\_Schaden Freude\_ of the bitterly hurt; but most of us, I judge, looked

on silently and sorrowfully, in sober thought, seeing sadly the prophecy

of our own souls.

Here is a civilization that has boasted much. Neither Roman nor Arab,

Greek nor Egyptian, Persian nor Mongol ever took himself and his own

perfectness with such disconcerting seriousness as the modern white man.

We whose shame, humiliation, and deep insult his aggrandizement so often

involved were never deceived. We looked at him clearly, with world-old

eyes, and saw simply a human thing, weak and pitiable and cruel, even as

we are and were.

These super-men and world-mastering demi-gods listened, however, to no

low tongues of ours, even when we pointed silently to their feet of

clay. Perhaps we, as folk of simpler soul and more primitive type, have

been most struck in the welter of recent years by the utter failure of

white religion. We have curled our lips in something like contempt as we

have witnessed glib apology and weary explanation. Nothing of the sort

deceived us. A nation's religion is its life, and as such white

Christianity is a miserable failure.

Nor would we be unfair in this criticism: We know that we, too, have

failed, as you have, and have rejected many a Buddha, even as you have

denied Christ; but we acknowledge our human frailty, while you, claiming

super-humanity, scoff endlessly at our shortcomings.

The number of white individuals who are practising with even reasonable

approximation the democracy and unselfishness of Jesus Christ is so

small and unimportant as to be fit subject for jest in Sunday

supplements and in \_Punch\_, \_Life\_, \_Le Rire\_, and \_Fliegende Blätter\_.

In her foreign mission work the extraordinary self-deception of white

religion is epitomized: solemnly the white world sends five million

dollars worth of missionary propaganda to Africa each year and in the

same twelve months adds twenty-five million dollars worth of the vilest

gin manufactured. Peace to the augurs of Rome!

We may, however, grant without argument that religious ideals have

always far outrun their very human devotees. Let us, then, turn to more

mundane matters of honor and fairness. The world today is trade. The

world has turned shopkeeper; history is economic history; living is

earning a living. Is it necessary to ask how much of high emprise and

honorable conduct has been found here? Something, to be sure. The

establishment of world credit systems is built on splendid and

realizable faith in fellow-men. But it is, after all, so low and

elementary a step that sometimes it looks merely like honor among

thieves, for the revelations of highway robbery and low cheating in the

business world and in all its great modern centers have raised in the

hearts of all true men in our day an exceeding great cry for revolution

in our basic methods and conceptions of industry and commerce.

We do not, for a moment, forget the robbery of other times and races

when trade was a most uncertain gamble; but was there not a certain

honesty and frankness in the evil that argued a saner morality? There

are more merchants today, surer deliveries, and wider well-being, but

are there not, also, bigger thieves, deeper injustice, and more

calloused selfishness in well-being? Be that as it may,--certainly the

nicer sense of honor that has risen ever and again in groups of

forward-thinking men has been curiously and broadly blunted. Consider

our chiefest industry,--fighting. Laboriously the Middle Ages built its

rules of fairness--equal armament, equal notice, equal conditions. What

do we see today? Machine-guns against assegais; conquest sugared with

religion; mutilation and rape masquerading as culture,--all this, with

vast applause at the superiority of white over black soldiers!

War is horrible! This the dark world knows to its awful cost. But has

it just become horrible, in these last days, when under essentially

equal conditions, equal armament, and equal waste of wealth white men

are fighting white men, with surgeons and nurses hovering near?

Think of the wars through which we have lived in the last decade: in

German Africa, in British Nigeria, in French and Spanish Morocco, in

China, in Persia, in the Balkans, in Tripoli, in Mexico, and in a dozen

lesser places--were not these horrible, too? Mind you, there were for

most of these wars no Red Cross funds.

Behold little Belgium and her pitiable plight, but has the world

forgotten Congo? What Belgium now suffers is not half, not even a tenth,

of what she has done to black Congo since Stanley's great dream of 1880.

Down the dark forests of inmost Africa sailed this modern Sir Galahad,

in the name of "the noble-minded men of several nations," to introduce

commerce and civilization. What came of it? "Rubber and murder, slavery

in its worst form," wrote Glave in 1895.

Harris declares that King Leopold's régime meant the death of twelve

million natives, "but what we who were behind the scenes felt most

keenly was the fact that the real catastrophe in the Congo was

desolation and murder in the larger sense. The invasion of family life,

the ruthless destruction of every social barrier, the shattering of

every tribal law, the introduction of criminal practices which struck

the chiefs of the people dumb with horror--in a word, a veritable

avalanche of filth and immorality overwhelmed the Congo tribes."

Yet the fields of Belgium laughed, the cities were gay, art and science

flourished; the groans that helped to nourish this civilization fell on

deaf ears because the world round about was doing the same sort of thing

elsewhere on its own account.

As we saw the dead dimly through rifts of battlesmoke and heard faintly

the cursings and accusations of blood brothers, we darker men said: This

is not Europe gone mad; this is not aberration nor insanity; this \_is\_

Europe; this seeming Terrible is the real soul of white culture--back of

all culture,--stripped and visible today. This is where the world has

arrived,--these dark and awful depths and not the shining and ineffable

heights of which it boasted. Here is whither the might and energy of

modern humanity has really gone.

But may not the world cry back at us and ask: "What better thing have

you to show? What have you done or would do better than this if you had

today the world rule? Paint with all riot of hateful colors the thin

skin of European culture,--is it not better than any culture that arose

in Africa or Asia?"

It is. Of this there is no doubt and never has been; but why is it

better? Is it better because Europeans are better, nobler, greater, and

more gifted than other folk? It is not. Europe has never produced and

never will in our day bring forth a single human soul who cannot be

matched and over-matched in every line of human endeavor by Asia and

Africa. Run the gamut, if you will, and let us have the Europeans who in

sober truth over-match Nefertari, Mohammed, Rameses and Askia,

Confucius, Buddha, and Jesus Christ. If we could scan the calendar of

thousands of lesser men, in like comparison, the result would be the

same; but we cannot do this because of the deliberately educated

ignorance of white schools by which they remember Napoleon and forget

Sonni Ali.

The greatness of Europe has lain in the width of the stage on which she

has played her part, the strength of the foundations on which she has

builded, and a natural, human ability no whit greater (if as great) than

that of other days and races. In other words, the deeper reasons for the

triumph of European civilization lie quite outside and beyond

Europe,--back in the universal struggles of all mankind.

Why, then, is Europe great? Because of the foundations which the mighty

past have furnished her to build upon: the iron trade of ancient, black

Africa, the religion and empire-building of yellow Asia, the art and

science of the "dago" Mediterranean shore, east, south, and west, as

well as north. And where she has builded securely upon this great past

and learned from it she has gone forward to greater and more splendid

human triumph; but where she has ignored this past and forgotten and

sneered at it, she has shown the cloven hoof of poor, crucified

humanity,--she has played, like other empires gone, the world fool!

If, then, European triumphs in culture have been greater, so, too, may

her failures have been greater. How great a failure and a failure in

what does the World War betoken? Was it national jealousy of the sort of

the seventeenth century? But Europe has done more to break down national

barriers than any preceding culture. Was it fear of the balance of power

in Europe? Hardly, save in the half-Asiatic problems of the Balkans.

What, then, does Hauptmann mean when he says: "Our jealous enemies

forged an iron ring about our breasts and we knew our breasts had to

expand,--that we had to split asunder this ring or else we had to cease

breathing. But Germany will not cease to breathe and so it came to pass

that the iron ring was forced apart."

Whither is this expansion? What is that breath of life, thought to be so

indispensable to a great European nation? Manifestly it is expansion

overseas; it is colonial aggrandizement which explains, and alone

adequately explains, the World War. How many of us today fully realize

the current theory of colonial expansion, of the relation of Europe

which is white, to the world which is black and brown and yellow?

Bluntly put, that theory is this: It is the duty of white Europe to

divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe's good.

This Europe has largely done. The European world is using black and

brown men for all the uses which men know. Slowly but surely white

culture is evolving the theory that "darkies" are born beasts of burden

for white folk. It were silly to think otherwise, cries the cultured

world, with stronger and shriller accord. The supporting arguments grow

and twist themselves in the mouths of merchant, scientist, soldier,

traveler, writer, and missionary: Darker peoples are dark in mind as

well as in body; of dark, uncertain, and imperfect descent; of frailer,

cheaper stuff; they are cowards in the face of mausers and maxims; they

have no feelings, aspirations, and loves; they are fools, illogical

idiots,--"half-devil and half-child."

Such as they are civilization must, naturally, raise them, but soberly

and in limited ways. They are not simply dark white men. They are not

"men" in the sense that Europeans are men. To the very limited extent of

their shallow capacities lift them to be useful to whites, to raise

cotton, gather rubber, fetch ivory, dig diamonds,--and let them be paid

what men think they are worth--white men who know them to be well-nigh

worthless.

Such degrading of men by men is as old as mankind and the invention of

no one race or people. Ever have men striven to conceive of their

victims as different from the victors, endlessly different, in soul and

blood, strength and cunning, race and lineage. It has been left,

however, to Europe and to modern days to discover the eternal world-wide

mark of meanness,--color!

Such is the silent revolution that has gripped modern European culture

in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its zenith came in

Boxer times: White supremacy was all but world-wide, Africa was dead,

India conquered, Japan isolated, and China prostrate, while white

America whetted her sword for mongrel Mexico and mulatto South America,

lynching her own Negroes the while. Temporary halt in this program was

made by little Japan and the white world immediately sensed the peril of

such "yellow" presumption! What sort of a world would this be if yellow

men must be treated "white"? Immediately the eventual overthrow of Japan

became a subject of deep thought and intrigue, from St. Petersburg to

San Francisco, from the Key of Heaven to the Little Brother of the Poor.

The using of men for the benefit of masters is no new invention of

modern Europe. It is quite as old as the world. But Europe proposed to

apply it on a scale and with an elaborateness of detail of which no

former world ever dreamed. The imperial width of the thing,--the

heaven-defying audacity--makes its modern newness.

The scheme of Europe was no sudden invention, but a way out of

long-pressing difficulties. It is plain to modern white civilization

that the subjection of the white working classes cannot much longer be

maintained. Education, political power, and increased knowledge of the

technique and meaning of the industrial process are destined to make a

more and more equitable distribution of wealth in the near future. The

day of the very rich is drawing to a close, so far as individual white

nations are concerned. But there is a loophole. There is a chance for

exploitation on an immense scale for inordinate profit, not simply to

the very rich, but to the middle class and to the laborers. This chance

lies in the exploitation of darker peoples. It is here that the golden

hand beckons. Here are no labor unions or votes or questioning onlookers

or inconvenient consciences. These men may be used down to the very

bone, and shot and maimed in "punitive" expeditions when they revolt. In

these dark lands "industrial development" may repeat in exaggerated form

every horror of the industrial history of Europe, from slavery and rape

to disease and maiming, with only one test of success,--dividends!

This theory of human culture and its aims has worked itself through warp

and woof of our daily thought with a thoroughness that few realize.

Everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is "white";

everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is

"yellow"; a bad taste is "brown"; and the devil is "black." The changes

of this theme are continually rung in picture and story, in newspaper

heading and moving-picture, in sermon and school book, until, of course,

the King can do no wrong,--a White Man is always right and a Black Man

has no rights which a white man is bound to respect.

There must come the necessary despisings and hatreds of these savage

half-men, this unclean \_canaille\_ of the world--these dogs of men. All

through the world this gospel is preaching. It has its literature, it

has its secret propaganda and above all--it pays!

There's the rub,--it pays. Rubber, ivory, and palm-oil; tea, coffee, and

cocoa; bananas, oranges, and other fruit; cotton, gold, and

copper--they, and a hundred other things which dark and sweating bodies

hand up to the white world from pits of slime, pay and pay well, but of

all that the world gets the black world gets only the pittance that the

white world throws it disdainfully.

Small wonder, then, that in the practical world of things-that-be there

is jealousy and strife for the possession of the labor of dark millions,

for the right to bleed and exploit the colonies of the world where this

golden stream may be had, not always for the asking, but surely for the

whipping and shooting. It was this competition for the labor of yellow,

brown, and black folks that was the cause of the World War. Other causes

have been glibly given and other contributing causes there doubtless

were, but they were subsidiary and subordinate to this vast quest of the

dark world's wealth and toil.

Colonies, we call them, these places where "niggers" are cheap and the

earth is rich; they are those outlands where like a swarm of hungry

locusts white masters may settle to be served as kings, wield the lash

of slave-drivers, rape girls and wives, grow as rich as Croesus and send

homeward a golden stream. They belt the earth, these places, but they

cluster in the tropics, with its darkened peoples: in Hong Kong and

Anam, in Borneo and Rhodesia, in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, in Panama and

Havana--these are the El Dorados toward which the world powers stretch

itching palms.

Germany, at last one and united and secure on land, looked across the

seas and seeing England with sources of wealth insuring a luxury and

power which Germany could not hope to rival by the slower processes of

exploiting her own peasants and workingmen, especially with these

workers half in revolt, immediately built her navy and entered into a

desperate competition for possession of colonies of darker peoples. To

South America, to China, to Africa, to Asia Minor, she turned like a

hound quivering on the leash, impatient, suspicious, irritable, with

blood-shot eyes and dripping fangs, ready for the awful word. England

and France crouched watchfully over their bones, growling and wary, but

gnawing industriously, while the blood of the dark world whetted their

greedy appetites. In the background, shut out from the highway to the

seven seas, sat Russia and Austria, snarling and snapping at each other

and at the last Mediterranean gate to the El Dorado, where the Sick Man

enjoyed bad health, and where millions of serfs in the Balkans, Russia,

and Asia offered a feast to greed well-nigh as great as Africa.

The fateful day came. It had to come. The cause of war is preparation

for war; and of all that Europe has done in a century there is nothing

that has equaled in energy, thought, and time her preparation for

wholesale murder. The only adequate cause of this preparation was

conquest and conquest, not in Europe, but primarily among the darker

peoples of Asia and Africa; conquest, not for assimilation and uplift,

but for commerce and degradation. For this, and this mainly, did Europe

gird herself at frightful cost for war.

The red day dawned when the tinder was lighted in the Balkans and

Austro-Hungary seized a bit which brought her a step nearer to the

world's highway; she seized one bit and poised herself for another. Then

came that curious chorus of challenges, those leaping suspicions, raking

all causes for distrust and rivalry and hatred, but saying little of the

real and greatest cause.

Each nation felt its deep interests involved. But how? Not, surely, in

the death of Ferdinand the Warlike; not, surely, in the old,

half-forgotten \_revanche\_ for Alsace-Lorraine; not even in the

neutrality of Belgium. No! But in the possession of land overseas, in

the right to colonies, the chance to levy endless tribute on the darker

world,--on coolies in China, on starving peasants in India, on black

savages in Africa, on dying South Sea Islanders, on Indians of the

Amazon--all this and nothing more.

Even the broken reed on which we had rested high hopes of eternal

peace,--the guild of the laborers--the front of that very important

movement for human justice on which we had builded most, even this flew

like a straw before the breath of king and kaiser. Indeed, the flying

had been foreshadowed when in Germany and America "international"

Socialists had all but read yellow and black men out of the kingdom of

industrial justice. Subtly had they been bribed, but effectively: Were

they not lordly whites and should they not share in the spoils of rape?

High wages in the United States and England might be the skilfully

manipulated result of slavery in Africa and of peonage in Asia.

With the dog-in-the-manger theory of trade, with the determination to

reap inordinate profits and to exploit the weakest to the utmost there

came a new imperialism,--the rage for one's own nation to own the earth

or, at least, a large enough portion of it to insure as big profits as

the next nation. Where sections could not be owned by one dominant

nation there came a policy of "open door," but the "door" was open to

"white people only." As to the darkest and weakest of peoples there was

but one unanimity in Europe,--that which Hen Demberg of the German

Colonial Office called the agreement with England to maintain white

"prestige" in Africa,--the doctrine of the divine right of white people

to steal.

Thus the world market most wildly and desperately sought today is the

market where labor is cheapest and most helpless and profit is most

abundant. This labor is kept cheap and helpless because the white world

despises "darkies." If one has the temerity to suggest that these

workingmen may walk the way of white workingmen and climb by votes and

self-assertion and education to the rank of men, he is howled out of

court. They cannot do it and if they could, they shall not, for they are

the enemies of the white race and the whites shall rule forever and

forever and everywhere. Thus the hatred and despising of human beings

from whom Europe wishes to extort her luxuries has led to such jealousy

and bickering between European nations that they have fallen afoul of

each other and have fought like crazed beasts. Such is the fruit of

human hatred.

But what of the darker world that watches? Most men belong to this

world. With Negro and Negroid, East Indian, Chinese, and Japanese they

form two-thirds of the population of the world. A belief in humanity is

a belief in colored men. If the uplift of mankind must be done by men,

then the destinies of this world will rest ultimately in the hands of

darker nations.

What, then, is this dark world thinking? It is thinking that as wild

and awful as this shameful war was, \_it is nothing to compare with that

fight for freedom which black and brown and yellow men must and will

make unless their oppression and humiliation and insult at the hands of

the White World cease. The Dark World is going to submit to its present

treatment just as long as it must and not one moment longer.\_

Let me say this again and emphasize it and leave no room for mistaken

meaning: The World War was primarily the jealous and avaricious struggle

for the largest share in exploiting darker races. As such it is and must

be but the prelude to the armed and indignant protest of these despised

and raped peoples. Today Japan is hammering on the door of justice,

China is raising her half-manacled hands to knock next, India is

writhing for the freedom to knock, Egypt is sullenly muttering, the

Negroes of South and West Africa, of the West Indies, and of the United

States are just awakening to their shameful slavery. Is, then, this war

the end of wars? Can it be the end, so long as sits enthroned, even in

the souls of those who cry peace, the despising and robbing of darker

peoples? If Europe hugs this delusion, then this is not the end of world

war,--it is but the beginning!

We see Europe's greatest sin precisely where we found Africa's and

Asia's,--in human hatred, the despising of men; with this difference,

however: Europe has the awful lesson of the past before her, has the

splendid results of widened areas of tolerance, sympathy, and love among

men, and she faces a greater, an infinitely greater, world of men than

any preceding civilization ever faced.

It is curious to see America, the United States, looking on herself,

first, as a sort of natural peacemaker, then as a moral protagonist in

this terrible time. No nation is less fitted for this rôle. For two or

more centuries America has marched proudly in the van of human

hatred,--making bonfires of human flesh and laughing at them hideously,

and making the insulting of millions more than a matter of

dislike,--rather a great religion, a world war-cry: Up white, down

black; to your tents, O white folk, and world war with black and

parti-colored mongrel beasts!

Instead of standing as a great example of the success of democracy and

the possibility of human brotherhood America has taken her place as an

awful example of its pitfalls and failures, so far as black and brown

and yellow peoples are concerned. And this, too, in spite of the fact

that there has been no actual failure; the Indian is not dying out, the

Japanese and Chinese have not menaced the land, and the experiment of

Negro suffrage has resulted in the uplift of twelve million people at a

rate probably unparalleled in history. But what of this? America, Land

of Democracy, wanted to believe in the failure of democracy so far as

darker peoples were concerned. Absolutely without excuse she established

a caste system, rushed into preparation for war, and conquered tropical

colonies. She stands today shoulder to shoulder with Europe in Europe's

worst sin against civilization. She aspires to sit among the great

nations who arbitrate the fate of "lesser breeds without the law" and

she is at times heartily ashamed even of the large number of "new" white

people whom her democracy has admitted to place and power. Against this

surging forward of Irish and German, of Russian Jew, Slav and "dago" her

social bars have not availed, but against Negroes she can and does take

her unflinching and immovable stand, backed by this new public policy of

Europe. She trains her immigrants to this despising of "niggers" from

the day of their landing, and they carry and send the news back to the

submerged classes in the fatherlands.

\* \* \* \* \*

All this I see and hear up in my tower, above the thunder of the seven

seas. From my narrowed windows I stare into the night that looms beneath

the cloud-swept stars. Eastward and westward storms are

breaking,--great, ugly whirlwinds of hatred and blood and cruelty. I

will not believe them inevitable. I will not believe that all that was

must be, that all the shameful drama of the past must be done again

today before the sunlight sweeps the silver seas.

If I cry amid this roar of elemental forces, must my cry be in vain,

because it is but a cry,--a small and human cry amid Promethean gloom?

Back beyond the world and swept by these wild, white faces of the awful

dead, why will this Soul of White Folk,--this modern Prometheus,--hang

bound by his own binding, tethered by a fable of the past? I hear his

mighty cry reverberating through the world, "I am white!" Well and good,

O Prometheus, divine thief! Is not the world wide enough for two colors,

for many little shinings of the sun? Why, then, devour your own vitals

if I answer even as proudly, "I am black!"

\_The Riddle of the Sphinx\_

Dark daughter of the lotus leaves that watch the Southern Sea!

Wan spirit of a prisoned soul a-panting to be free!

The muttered music of thy streams, the whisper of the deep,

Have kissed each other in God's name and kissed a world to sleep.

The will of the world is a whistling wind, sweeping a cloud-swept sky,

And not from the East and not from the West knelled that

soul-waking cry,

But out of the South,--the sad, black South--it screamed from

the top of the sky,

Crying: "Awake, O ancient race!" Wailing, "O woman, arise!"

And crying and sighing and crying again as a voice in the

midnight cries,--

But the burden of white men bore her back and the white world

stifled her sighs.

The white world's vermin and filth:

All the dirt of London,

All the scum of New York;

Valiant spoilers of women

And conquerers of unarmed men;

Shameless breeders of bastards,

Drunk with the greed of gold,

Baiting their blood-stained hooks

With cant for the souls of the simple;

Bearing the white man's burden

Of liquor and lust and lies!

Unthankful we wince in the East,

Unthankful we wail from the westward,

Unthankfully thankful, we curse,

In the unworn wastes of the wild:

I hate them, Oh!

I hate them well,

I hate them, Christ!

As I hate hell!

If I were God,

I'd sound their knell

This day!

Who raised the fools to their glory,

But black men of Egypt and Ind,

Ethiopia's sons of the evening,

Indians and yellow Chinese,

Arabian children of morning,

And mongrels of Rome and Greece?

Ah, well!

And they that raised the boasters

Shall drag them down again,--

Down with the theft of their thieving

And murder and mocking of men;

Down with their barter of women

And laying and lying of creeds;

Down with their cheating of childhood

And drunken orgies of war,--

down

down

deep down,

Till the devil's strength be shorn,

Till some dim, darker David, a-hoeing of his corn,

And married maiden, mother of God,

Bid the black Christ be born!

Then shall our burden be manhood,

Be it yellow or black or white;

And poverty and justice and sorrow,

The humble, and simple and strong

Shall sing with the sons of morning

And daughters of even-song:

Black mother of the iron hills that ward the blazing sea,

Wild spirit of a storm-swept soul, a-struggling to be free,

Where 'neath the bloody finger-marks thy riven bosom quakes,

Thicken the thunders of God's Voice and lo! a world awakes!

III

THE HANDS OF ETHIOPIA

"\_Semper novi quid ex Africa\_," cried the Roman proconsul, and he voiced

the verdict of forty centuries. Yet there are those who would write

world history and leave out of account this most marvelous of

continents. Particularly today most men assume that Africa is far afield

from the center of our burning social problems and especially from our

problem of world war.

Always Africa is giving us something new or some metempsychosis of a

world-old thing. On its black bosom arose one of the earliest, if not

the earliest, of self-protecting civilizations, which grew so mightily

that it still furnishes superlatives to thinking and speaking men. Out

of its darker and more remote forest fastnesses came, if we may credit

many recent scientists, the first welding of iron, and we know that

agriculture and trade flourished there when Europe was a wilderness.

Nearly every human empire that has arisen in the world, material and

spiritual, has found some of its greatest crises on this continent of

Africa, from Greece to Great Britain. As Mommsen says: "It was through

Africa that Christianity became the religion of the world." In Africa

the last flood of Germanic invasions spent itself within hearing of the

last gasp of Byzantium, and it was through Africa that Islam came to

play its great rôle of conqueror and civilizer.

With the Renaissance and the widened world of modern thought Africa came

no less suddenly with her new-old gift. Shakespeare's "Ancient Pistol"

cries:

A foutre for the world and worldlings base!

I speak of Africa and golden joys!

He echoes a legend of gold from the days of Punt and Ophir to those of

Ghana, the Gold Coast, and the Rand. This thought had sent the world's

greed scurrying down the hot, mysterious coasts of Africa to the Good

Hope of gain, until for the first time a real world-commerce was born,

albeit it started as a commerce mainly in the bodies and souls of men.

The present problem of problems is nothing more than democracy beating

itself helplessly against the color bar,--purling, seeping, seething,

foaming to burst through, ever and again overwhelming the emerging

masses of white men in its rolling backwaters and held back by those who

dream of future kingdoms of greed built on black and brown and yellow

slavery.

The indictment of Africa against Europe is grave. For four hundred years

white Europe was the chief support of that trade in human beings which

first and last robbed black Africa of a hundred million human beings,

transformed the face of her social life, overthrew organized government,

distorted ancient industry, and snuffed out the lights of cultural

development. Today instead of removing laborers from Africa to distant

slavery, industry built on a new slavery approaches Africa to deprive

the natives of their land, to force them to toil, and to reap all the

profit for the white world.

It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader of the essential facts

underlying these broad assertions. A recent law of the Union of South

Africa assigns nearly two hundred and fifty million acres of the best of

natives' land to a million and a half whites and leaves thirty-six

million acres of swamp and marsh for four and a half-million blacks. In

Rhodesia over ninety million acres have been practically confiscated. In

the Belgian Congo all the land was declared the property of the state.

Slavery in all but name has been the foundation of the cocoa industry in

St. Thome and St. Principe and in the mines of the Rand. Gin has been

one of the greatest of European imports, having increased fifty per

cent. in ten years and reaching a total of at least twenty-five million

dollars a year today. Negroes of ability have been carefully gotten rid

of, deposed from authority, kept out of positions of influence, and

discredited in their people's eyes, while a caste of white overseers and

governing officials has appeared everywhere.

Naturally, the picture is not all lurid. David Livingstone has had his

successors and Europe has given Africa something of value in the

beginning of education and industry. Yet the balance of iniquity is

desperately large; but worse than that, it has aroused no world protest.

A great Englishman, familiar with African problems for a generation,

says frankly today: "There does not exist any real international

conscience to which you can appeal."

Moreover, that treatment shows no certain signs of abatement. Today in

England the Empire Resources Development Committee proposes to treat

African colonies as "crown estates" and by intensive scientific

exploitation of both land and labor to make these colonies pay the

English national debt after the war! German thinkers, knowing the

tremendous demand for raw material which would follow the war, had

similar plans of exploitation. "It is the clear, common sense of the

African situation," says H.G. Wells, "that while these precious regions

of raw material remain divided up between a number of competitive

European imperialisms, each resolutely set upon the exploitation of its

'possessions' to its own advantage and the disadvantage of the others,

there can be no permanent peace in the world. It is impossible."

We, then, who fought the war against war; who in a hell of blood and

suffering held hardly our souls in leash by the vision of a world

organized for peace; who are looking for industrial democracy and for

the organization of Europe so as to avoid incentives to war,--we, least

of all, should be willing to leave the backward world as the greatest

temptation, not only to wars based on international jealousies, but to

the most horrible of wars,--which arise from the revolt of the maddened

against those who hold them in common contempt.

Consider, my reader,--if you were today a man of some education and

knowledge, but born a Japanese or a Chinaman, an East Indian or a Negro,

what would you do and think? What would be in the present chaos your

outlook and plan for the future? Manifestly, you would want freedom for

your people,--freedom from insult, from segregation, from poverty, from

physical slavery. If the attitude of the European and American worlds is

in the future going to be based essentially upon the same policies as in

the past, then there is but one thing for the trained man of darker

blood to do and that is definitely and as openly as possible to organize

his world for war against Europe. He may have to do it by secret,

underground propaganda, as in Egypt and India and eventually in the

United States; or by open increase of armament, as in Japan; or by

desperate efforts at modernization, as in China; but he must do it. He

represents the vast majority of mankind. To surrender would be far worse

than physical death. There is no way out unless the white world gives up

such insult as its modern use of the adjective "yellow" indicates, or

its connotation of "chink" and "nigger" implies; either it gives up the

plan of color serfdom which its use of the other adjective "white"

implies, as indicating everything decent and every part of the world

worth living in,--or trouble is written in the stars!

It is, therefore, of singular importance after disquieting delay to see

the real Pacifist appear. Both England and Germany have recently been

basing their claims to parts of black Africa on the wishes and interests

of the black inhabitants. Lloyd George has declared "the general

principle of national self-determination applicable at least to German

Africa," while Chancellor Hertling once welcomed a discussion "on the

reconstruction of the world's colonial possessions."

The demand that an Africa for Africans shall replace the present

barbarous scramble for exploitation by individual states comes from

singularly different sources. Colored America demands that "the

conquered German colonies should not be returned to Germany, neither

should they be held by the Allies. Here is the opportunity for the

establishment of a nation that may never recur. Thousands of colored

men, sick of white arrogance and hypocrisy, see in this their race's

only salvation."

Sir Harry H. Johnston recently said: "If we are to talk, as we do,

sentimentally but justly about restoring the nationhood of Poland, about

giving satisfaction to the separatist feeling in Ireland, and about what

is to be done for European nations who are oppressed, then we can hardly

exclude from this feeling the countries of Africa."

Laborers, black laborers, on the Canal Zone write: "Out of this chaos

may be the great awakening of our race. There is cause for rejoicing. If

we fail to embrace this opportunity now, we fail to see how we will be

ever able to solve the race question. It is for the British Negro, the

French Negro, and the American Negro to rise to the occasion and start a

national campaign, jointly and collectively, with this aim in view."

From British West Africa comes the bitter complaint "that the West

Africans should have the right or opportunity to settle their future for

themselves is a thing which hardly enters the mind of the European

politician. That the Balkan States should be admitted to the Council of

Peace and decide the government under which they are to live is taken as

a matter of course because they are Europeans, but no extra-European is

credited, even by the extremist advocates of human equality, with any

right except to humbly accept the fate which Europe shall decide for

him."

Here, then, is the danger and the demand; and the real Pacifist will

seek to organize, not simply the masses in white nations, guarding

against exploitation and profiteering, but will remember that no

permanent relief can come but by including in this organization the

lowest and the most exploited races in the world. World philanthropy,

like national philanthropy, must come as uplift and prevention and not

merely as alleviation and religious conversion. Reverence for humanity,

as such, must be installed in the world, and Africa should be the

talisman.

Black Africa, including British, French, Belgian, Portuguese, Italian,

and Spanish possessions and the independent states of Abyssinia and

Liberia and leaving out of account Egypt and North Africa, on the one

hand, and South Africa, on the other, has an area of 8,200,000 square

miles and a population well over one hundred millions of black men,

with less than one hundred thousand whites.

Commercial exploitation in Africa has already larger results to show

than most people realize. Annually $200,000,000 worth of goods was

coming out of black Africa before the World War, including a third of

the world's supply of rubber, a quarter of all of the world's cocoa, and

practically all of the world's cloves, gum-arabic, and palm-oil. In

exchange there was being returned to Africa one hundred millions in

cotton cloth, twenty-five millions in iron and steel, and as much in

foods, and probably twenty-five millions in liquors.

Here are the beginnings of a modern industrial system: iron and steel

for permanent investment, bound to yield large dividends; cloth as the

cheapest exchange for invaluable raw material; liquor to tickle the

appetites of the natives and render the alienation of land and the

breakdown of customary law easier; eventually forced and contract labor

under white drivers to increase and systematize the production of raw

materials. These materials are capable of indefinite expansion: cotton

may yet challenge the southern United States, fruits and vegetables,

hides and skins, lumber and dye-stuffs, coffee and tea, grain and

tobacco, and fibers of all sorts can easily follow organized and

systematic toil.

Is it a paradise of industry we thus contemplate? It is much more likely

to be a hell. Under present plans there will be no voice or law or

custom to protect labor, no trades unions, no eight-hour laws, no

factory legislation,--nothing of that great body of legislation built up

in modern days to protect mankind from sinking to the level of beasts of

burden. All the industrial deviltry, which civilization has been driving

to the slums and the backwaters, will have a voiceless continent to

conceal it. If the slave cannot be taken from Africa, slavery can be

taken to Africa.

Who are the folk who live here? They are brown and black, curly and

crisp-haired, short and tall, and longheaded. Out of them in days

without date flowed the beginnings of Egypt; among them rose, later,

centers of culture at Ghana, Melle, and Timbuktu. Kingdoms and empires

flourished in Songhay and Zymbabwe, and art and industry in Yoruba and

Benin. They have fought every human calamity in its most hideous form

and yet today they hold some similar vestiges of a mighty past,--their

work in iron, their weaving and carving, their music and singing, their

tribal government, their town-meeting and marketplace, their desperate

valor in war.

Missionaries and commerce have left some good with all their evil. In

black Africa today there are more than a thousand government schools and

some thirty thousand mission schools, with a more or less regular

attendance of three-quarters of a million school children. In a few

cases training of a higher order is given chiefs' sons and selected

pupils. These beginnings of education are not much for so vast a land

and there is no general standard or set plan of development, but, after

all, the children of Africa are beginning to learn.

In black Africa today only one-seventeenth of the land and a ninth of

the people in Liberia and Abyssinia are approximately independent,

although menaced and policed by European capitalism. Half the land and

the people are in domains under Portugal, France, and Belgium, held with

the avowed idea of exploitation for the benefit of Europe under a system

of caste and color serfdom. Out of this dangerous nadir of development

stretch two paths: one is indicated by the condition of about three per

cent of the people who in Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and French

Senegal, are tending toward the path of modern development; the other

path, followed by a fourth of the land and people, has local

self-government and native customs and might evolve, if undisturbed, a

native culture along their own peculiar lines. A tenth of the land,

sparsely settled, is being monopolized and held for whites to make an

African Australia. To these later folk must be added the four and

one-half millions of the South African Union, who by every modern device

are being forced into landless serfdom.

Before the World War tendencies were strongly toward the destruction of

independent Africa, the industrial slavery of the mass of the blacks and

the encouragement of white immigration, where possible, to hold the

blacks in subjection.

Against this idea let us set the conception of a new African World

State, a Black Africa, applying to these peoples the splendid

pronouncements which have of late been so broadly and perhaps carelessly

given the world: recognizing in Africa the declaration of the American

Federation of Labor, that "no people must be forced under sovereignty

under which it does not wish to live"; recognizing in President Wilson's

message to the Russians, the "principle of the undictated development of

all peoples"; recognizing the resolution of the recent conference of the

Aborigines Protection Society of England, "that in any reconstruction of

Africa, which may result from this war, the interests of the native

inhabitants and also their wishes, in so far as those wishes can be

clearly ascertained, should be recognized as among the principal factors

upon which the decision of their destiny should be based." In other

words, recognizing for the first time in the history of the modern world

that black men are human.

It may not be possible to build this state at once. With the victory of

the Entente Allies, the German colonies, with their million of square

miles and one-half million black inhabitants, should form such a

nucleus. It would give Black Africa its physical beginnings. Beginning

with the German colonies two other sets of colonies could be added, for

obvious reasons. Neither Portugal nor Belgium has shown any particular

capacity for governing colonial peoples. Valid excuses may in both cases

be advanced, but it would certainly be fair to Belgium to have her start

her great task of reorganization after the World War with neither the

burden nor the temptation of colonies; and in the same way Portugal has,

in reality, the alternative of either giving up her colonies to an

African State or to some other European State in the near future. These

two sets of colonies would add 1,700,000 square miles and eighteen

million inhabitants. It would not, however, be fair to despoil Germany,

Belgium, and Portugal of their colonies unless, as Count Hertling once

demanded, the whole question of colonies be opened.

How far shall the modern world recognize nations which are not nations,

but combinations of a dominant caste and a suppressed horde of serfs?

Will it not be possible to rebuild a world with compact nations, empires

of self-governing elements, and colonies of backward peoples under

benevolent international control?

The great test would be easy. Does England propose to erect in India and

Nigeria nations brown and black which shall be eventually independent,

self-governing entities, with a full voice in the British Imperial

Government? If not, let these states either have independence at once

or, if unfitted for that, be put under international tutelage and

guardianship. It is possible that France, with her great heart, may

welcome a Black France,--an enlarged Senegal in Africa; but it would

seem that eventually all Africa south of twenty degrees north latitude

and north of the Union of South Africa should be included in a new

African State. Somaliland and Eritrea should be given to Abyssinia, and

then with Liberia we would start with two small, independent African

states and one large state under international control.

Does this sound like an impossible dream? No one could be blamed for so

regarding it before 1914. I, myself, would have agreed with them. But

since the nightmare of 1914-1918, since we have seen the impossible

happen and the unspeakable become so common as to cease to stir us; in a

day when Russia has dethroned her Czar, England has granted the suffrage

to women and is in the act of giving Home Rule to Ireland; when Germany

has adopted parliamentary government; when Jerusalem has been delivered

from the Turks; and the United States has taken control of its

railroads,--is it really so far-fetched to think of an Africa for the

Africans, guided by organized civilization?

No one would expect this new state to be independent and self-governing

from the start. Contrary, however, to present schemes for Africa the

world would expect independence and self-government as the only possible

end of the experiment At first we can conceive of no better way of

governing this state than through that same international control by

which we hope to govern the world for peace. A curious and instructive

parallel has been drawn by Simeon Strunsky: "Just as the common

ownership of the northwest territory helped to weld the colonies into

the United States, so could not joint and benevolent domination of

Africa and of other backward parts of the world be a cornerstone upon

which the future federation of the world could be built?"

From the British Labor Party comes this declaration: "With regard to the

colonies of the several belligerents in tropical Africa, from sea to

sea, the British Labor Movement disclaims all sympathy with the

imperialist idea that these should form the booty of any nation, should

be exploited for the profit of the capitalists, or should be used for

the promotion of the militarists' aims of government. In view of the

fact that it is impracticable here to leave the various peoples

concerned to settle their own destinies it is suggested that the

interests of humanity would be best served by the full and frank

abandonment by all the belligerents of any dreams of an African Empire;

the transfer of the present colonies of the European Powers in tropical

Africa, however, and the limits of this area may be defined to the

proposed Supernational Authority, or League of Nations."

Lloyd George himself has said in regard to the German colonies a word

difficult to restrict merely to them: "I have repeatedly declared that

they are held at the disposal of a conference, whose decision must have

primary regard to the wishes and interests of the native inhabitants of

such colonies. None of those territories is inhabited by Europeans. The

governing considerations, therefore, must be that the inhabitants should

be placed under the control of an administration acceptable to

themselves, one of whose main purposes will be to prevent their

exploitation for the benefit of European capitalists or governments."

The special commission for the government of this African State must,

naturally, be chosen with great care and thought. It must represent, not

simply governments, but civilization, science, commerce, social reform,

religious philanthropy without sectarian propaganda. It must include,

not simply white men, but educated and trained men of Negro blood. The

guiding principles before such a commission should be clearly

understood. In the first place, it ought by this time to be realized by

the labor movement throughout the world that no industrial democracy can

be built on industrial despotism, whether the two systems are in the

same country or in different countries, since the world today so nearly

approaches a common industrial unity. If, therefore, it is impossible in

any single land to uplift permanently skilled labor without also raising

common labor, so, too, there can be no permanent uplift of American or

European labor as long as African laborers are slaves.

Secondly, this building of a new African State does not mean the

segregation in it of all the world's black folk. It is too late in the

history of the world to go back to the idea of absolute racial

segregation. The new African State would not involve any idea of a vast

transplantation of the twenty-seven million Negroids of the western

world, of Africa, or of the gathering there of Negroid Asia. The Negroes

in the United States and the other Americas have earned the right to

fight out their problems where they are, but they could easily furnish

from time to time technical experts, leaders of thought, and

missionaries of culture for their backward brethren in the new Africa.

With these two principles, the practical policies to be followed out in

the government of the new states should involve a thorough and complete

system of modern education, built upon the present government, religion,

and customary laws of the natives. There should be no violent tampering

with the curiously efficient African institutions of local

self-government through the family and the tribe; there should be no

attempt at sudden "conversion" by religious propaganda. Obviously

deleterious customs and unsanitary usages must gradually be abolished,

but the general government, set up from without, must follow the example

of the best colonial administrators and build on recognized, established

foundations rather than from entirely new and theoretical plans.

The real effort to modernize Africa should be through schools rather

than churches. Within ten years, twenty million black children ought to

be in school. Within a generation young Africa should know the essential

outlines of modern culture and groups of bright African students could

be going to the world's great universities. From the beginning the

actual general government should use both colored and white officials

and later natives should be worked in. Taxation and industry could

follow the newer ideals of industrial democracy, avoiding private land

monopoly and poverty, and promoting co-operation in production and the

socialization of income. Difficulties as to capital and revenue would be

far less than many imagine. If a capable English administrator of

British Nigeria could with $1,500 build up a cocoa industry of twenty

million dollars annually, what might not be done in all Africa, without

gin, thieves, and hypocrisy?

Capital could not only be accumulated in Africa, but attracted from the

white world, with one great difference from present usage: no return so

fabulous would be offered that civilized lands would be tempted to

divert to colonial trade and invest materials and labor needed by the

masses at home, but rather would receive the same modest profits as

legitimate home industry offers.

There is no sense in asserting that the ideal of an African State, thus

governed and directed toward independence and self-government, is

impossible of realization. The first great essential is that the

civilized world believe in its possibility. By reason of a crime

(perhaps the greatest crime in human history) the modern world has been

systematically taught to despise colored peoples. Men of education and

decency ask, and ask seriously, if it is really possible to uplift

Africa. Are Negroes human, or, if human, developed far enough to absorb,

even under benevolent tutelage, any appreciable part of modern culture?

Has not the experiment been tried in Haiti and Liberia, and failed?

One cannot ignore the extraordinary fact that a world campaign beginning

with the slave-trade and ending with the refusal to capitalize the word

"Negro," leading through a passionate defense of slavery by attributing

every bestiality to blacks and finally culminating in the evident modern

profit which lies in degrading blacks,--all this has unconsciously

trained millions of honest, modern men into the belief that black folk

are sub-human. This belief is not based on science, else it would be

held as a postulate of the most tentative kind, ready at any time to be

withdrawn in the face of facts; the belief is not based on history, for

it is absolutely contradicted by Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and

Arabian experience; nor is the belief based on any careful survey of the

social development of men of Negro blood to-day in Africa and America.

It is simply passionate, deep-seated heritage, and as such can be moved

by neither argument nor fact. Only faith in humanity will lead the world

to rise above its present color prejudice.

Those who do believe in men, who know what black men have done in human

history, who have taken pains to follow even superficially the story of

the rise of the Negro in Africa, the West Indies, and the Americas of

our day know that our modern contempt of Negroes rests upon no

scientific foundation worth a moment's attention. It is nothing more

than a vicious habit of mind. It could as easily be overthrown as our

belief in war, as our international hatreds, as our old conception of

the status of women, as our fear of educating the masses, and as our

belief in the necessity of poverty. We can, if we will, inaugurate on

the Dark Continent a last great crusade for humanity. With Africa

redeemed Asia would be safe and Europe indeed triumphant.

I have not mentioned North and South Africa, because my eye was centered

on the main mass of the Negro race. Yet it is clear that for the

development of Central Africa, Egypt should be free and independent,

there along the highway to a free and independent India; while Morocco,

Algeria, Tunis, and Tripoli must become a part of Europe, with modern

development and home rule. South Africa, stripped of its black serfs and

their lands, must admit the resident natives and colored folk to its

body politic as equals.

The hands which Ethiopia shall soon stretch out unto God are not mere

hands of helplessness and supplication, but rather are they hands of

pain and promise; hard, gnarled, and muscled for the world's real work;

they are hands of fellowship for the half-submerged masses of a

distempered world; they are hands of helpfulness for an agonized God!

\* \* \* \* \*

Twenty centuries before Christ a great cloud swept over seas and settled

on Africa, darkening and well-nigh blotting out the culture of the land

of Egypt. For half a thousand years it rested there, until a black

woman, Queen Nefertari, "the most venerated figure in Egyptian history,"

rose to the throne of the Pharaohs and redeemed the world and her

people. Twenty centuries after Christ, Black Africa,--prostrated, raped,

and shamed, lies at the feet of the conquering Philistines of Europe.

Beyond the awful sea a black woman is weeping and waiting, with her sons

on her breast. What shall the end be? The world-old and fearful

things,--war and wealth, murder and luxury? Or shall it be a new

thing,--a new peace and a new democracy of all races,--a great humanity

of equal men? "\_Semper novi quid ex Africa\_!"

\_The Princess of the Hither Isles\_

Her soul was beautiful, wherefore she kept it veiled in lightly-laced

humility and fear, out of which peered anxiously and anon the white and

blue and pale-gold of her face,-beautiful as daybreak or as the laughing

of a child. She sat in the Hither Isles, well walled between the This

and Now, upon a low and silver throne, and leaned upon its armposts,

sadly looking upward toward the sun. Now the Hither Isles are flat and

cold and swampy, with drear-drab light and all manner of slimy, creeping

things, and piles of dirt and clouds of flying dust and sordid scraping

and feeding and noise.

She hated them and ever as her hands and busy feet swept back the dust

and slime her soul sat silver-throned, staring toward the great hill to

the westward, which shone so brilliant-golden beneath the sunlight and

above the sea.

The sea moaned and with it moaned the princess' soul, for she was

lonely,--very, very lonely, and full weary of the monotone of life. So

she was glad to see a moving in Yonder Kingdom on the mountainside,

where the sun shone warm, and when the king of Yonder Kingdom, silken in

robe and golden-crowned and warded by his hound, walked down along the

restless waters and sat beside the armpost of her throne, she wondered

why she could not love him and fly with him up the shining mountain's

side, out of the dirt and dust that nested between the This and Now. She

looked at him and tried to be glad, for he was bonny and good to look

upon, this king of Yonder Kingdom,--tall and straight, thin-lipped and

white and tawny. So, again, this last day, she strove to burn life into

his singularly sodden clay,--to put his icy soul aflame wherewith to

warm her own, to set his senses singing. Vacantly he heard her winged

words, staring and curling his long mustaches with vast thoughtfulness.

Then he said:

"We've found more gold in Yonder Kingdom."

"Hell seize your gold!" blurted the princess.

"No,--it's mine," he maintained stolidly.

She raised her eyes. "It belongs," she said, "to the Empire of the Sun."

"Nay,--the Sun belongs to us," said the king calmly as he glanced to

where Yonder Kingdom blushed above the sea. She glanced, too, and a

softness crept into her eyes.

"No, no," she murmured as with hesitating pause she raised her eyes

above the sea, above the hill, up into the sky where the sun hung silent

and splendid. Its robes were heaven's blue, lined and broidered in

living flame, and its crown was one vast jewel, glistening in glittering

glory that made the sun's own face a blackness,--the blackness of utter

light. With blinded, tear-filled eyes she peered into that formless

black and burning face and sensed in its soft, sad gleam unfathomed

understanding. With sudden, wild abandon she stretched her arms toward

it appealing, beseeching, entreating, and lo!

"Niggers and dagoes," said the king of Yonder Kingdom, glancing

carelessly backward and lighting in his lips a carefully rolled wisp of

fragrant tobacco. She looked back, too, but in half-wondering terror,

for it seemed--

A beggar man was creeping across the swamp, shuffling through the dirt

and slime. He was little and bald and black, rough-clothed, sodden with

dirt, and bent with toil. Yet withal something she sensed about him and

it seemed,--

The king of Yonder Kingdom lounged more comfortably beside the silver

throne and let curl a tiny trail of light-blue smoke.

"I hate beggars," he said, "especially brown and black ones." And he

then pointed at the beggar's retinue and laughed,--an unpleasant laugh,

welded of contempt and amusement. The princess looked and shrank on her

throne. He, the beggar man, was--was what? But his retinue,--that

squalid, sordid, parti-colored band of vacant, dull-faced filth and

viciousness--was writhing over the land, and he and they seemed almost

crouching underneath the scorpion lash of one tall skeleton, that looked

like Death, and the twisted woman whom men called Pain. Yet they all

walked as one.

The King of Yonder Kingdom laughed, but the princess shrank on her

throne, and the king on seeing her thus took a gold-piece from out of

his purse and tossed it carelessly to the passing throng. She watched it

with fascinated eyes,--how it rose and sailed and whirled and struggled

in the air, then seemed to burst, and upward flew its light and sheen

and downward dropped its dross. She glanced at the king, but he was

lighting a match. She watched the dross wallow in the slime, but the

sunlight fell on the back of the beggar's neck, and he turned his head.

The beggar passing afar turned his head and the princess straightened

on her throne; he turned his head and she shivered forward on her

silver seat; he looked upon her full and slow and suddenly she saw

within that formless black and burning face the same soft, glad gleam of

utter understanding, seen so many times before. She saw the suffering of

endless years and endless love that softened it. She saw the burning

passion of the sun and with it the cold, unbending duty-deeds of upper

air. All she had seen and dreamed of seeing in the rising, blazing sun

she saw now again and with it myriads more of human tenderness, of

longing, and of love. So, then, she knew. She rose as to a dream come

true, with solemn face and waiting eyes.

With her rose the king of Yonder Kingdom, almost eagerly.

"You'll come?" he cried. "You'll come and see my gold?" And then in

sudden generosity, he added: "You'll have a golden throne,-up there-when

we marry."

But she, looking up and on with radiant face, answered softly: "I come."

So down and up and on they mounted,-the black beggar man and his

cavalcade of Death and Pain, and then a space; and then a lone, black

hound that nosed and whimpered as he ran, and then a space; and then the

king of Yonder Kingdom in his robes, and then a space; and last the

princess of the Hither Isles, with face set sunward and lovelight in her

eyes.

And so they marched and struggled on and up through endless years and

spaces and ever the black beggar looked back past death and pain toward

the maid and ever the maid strove forward with lovelit eyes, but ever

the great and silken shoulders of the king of Yonder Kingdom arose

between the princess and the sun like a cloud of storms.

Now, finally, they neared unto the hillsides topmost shoulder and there

most eagerly the king bent to the bowels of the earth and bared its

golden entrails,-all green and gray and rusted-while the princess

strained her pitiful eyes aloft to where the beggar, set 'twixt Death

and Pain, whirled his slim back against the glory of the setting sun and

stood somber in his grave majesty, enhaloed and transfigured,

outstretching his long arms, and around all heaven glittered jewels in a

cloth of gold.

A while the princess stood and moaned in mad amaze, then with one wilful

wrench she bared the white flowers of her breast and snatching forth her

own red heart held it with one hand aloft while with the other she

gathered close her robe and poised herself.

The king of Yonder Kingdom looked upward quickly, curiously, still

fingering the earth, and saw the offer of her bleeding heart.

"It's a Negro!" he growled darkly; "it may not be."

The woman quivered.

"It's a nigger!" he repeated fiercely. "It's neither God nor man, but a

nigger!"

The princess stepped forward.

The king grasped his sword and looked north and east; he raised his

sword and looked south and west.

"I seek the sun," the princess sang, and started into the west.

"Never!" cried the king of Yonder Kingdom, "for such were blasphemy and

defilement and the making of all evil."

So, raising his great sword he struck with all his might, and more. Down

hissed the blow and it bit that little, white, heart-holding hand until

it flew armless and disbodied up through the sunlit air. Down hissed the

blow and it clove the whimpering hound until his last shriek shook the

stars. Down hissed the blow and it rent the earth. It trembled, fell

apart, and yawned to a chasm wide as earth from heaven, deep as hell,

and empty, cold, and silent.

On yonder distant shore blazed the mighty Empire of the Sun in warm and

blissful radiance, while on this side, in shadows cold and dark, gloomed

the Hither Isles and the hill that once was golden, but now was green

and slimy dross; all below was the sad and moaning sea, while between

the Here and There flew the severed hand and dripped the bleeding heart.

Then up from the soul of the princess welled a cry of dark

despair,--such a cry as only babe-raped mothers know and murdered loves.

Poised on the crumbling edge of that great nothingness the princess

hung, hungering with her eyes and straining her fainting ears against

the awful splendor of the sky.

Out from the slime and shadows groped the king, thundering: "Back--don't

be a fool!"

But down through the thin ether thrilled the still and throbbing warmth

of heaven's sun, whispering "Leap!"

And the princess leapt.

IV

OF WORK AND WEALTH

For fifteen years I was a teacher of youth. They were years out of the

fullness and bloom of my younger manhood. They were years mingled of

half breathless work, of anxious self-questionings, of planning and

replanning, of disillusion, or mounting wonder.

The teacher's life is a double one. He stands in a certain fear. He

tends to be stilted, almost dishonest, veiling himself before those

awful eyes. Not the eyes of Almighty God are so straight, so

penetrating, so all-seeing as the wonder-swept eyes of youth. You walk

into a room: to the left is a tall window, bright with colors of crimson

and gold and sunshine. Here are rows of books and there is a table.

Somber blackboards clothe the walls to the right and beside your desk is

the delicate ivory of a nobly cast head. But you see nothing of this:

you see only a silence and eyes,--fringed, soft eyes; hard eyes; eyes

great and small; eyes here so poignant with beauty that the sob

struggles in your throat; eyes there so hard with sorrow that laughter

wells up to meet and beat it back; eyes through which the mockery and

ridicule of hell or some pulse of high heaven may suddenly flash. Ah!

That mighty pause before the class,--that orison and benediction--how

much of my life it has been and made.

I fought earnestly against posing before my class. I tried to be natural

and honest and frank, but it was a bitter hard. What would you say to a

soft, brown face, aureoled in a thousand ripples of gray-black hair,

which knells suddenly: "Do you trust white people?" You do not and you

know that you do not, much as you want to; yet you rise and lie and say

you do; you must say it for her salvation and the world's; you repeat

that she must trust them, that most white folks are honest, and all the

while you are lying and every level, silent eye there knows you are

lying, and miserably you sit and lie on, to the greater glory of God.

I taught history and economics and something called "sociology" at

Atlanta University, where, as our Mr. Webster used to say, we professors

occupied settees and not mere chairs. I was fortunate with this teaching

in having vivid in the minds of my pupils a concrete social problem of

which we all were parts and which we desperately desired to solve. There

was little danger, then, of my teaching or of their thinking becoming

purely theoretical. Work and wage were thrilling realities to us all.

What did we study? I can tell you best by taking a concrete human case,

such as was continually leaping to our eyes and thought and demanding

understanding and interpretation and what I could bring of prophecy.

\* \* \* \* \*

St. Louis sprawls where mighty rivers meet,--as broad as Philadelphia,

but three stories high instead of two, with wider streets and dirtier

atmosphere, over the dull-brown of wide, calm rivers. The city overflows

into the valleys of Illinois and lies there, writhing under its grimy

cloud. The other city is dusty and hot beyond all dream,--a feverish

Pittsburg in the Mississippi Valley--a great, ruthless, terrible thing!

It is the sort that crushes man and invokes some living superman,--a

giant of things done, a clang of awful accomplishment.

Three men came wandering across this place. They were neither kings nor

wise men, but they came with every significance--perhaps even

greater--than that which the kings bore in the days of old. There was

one who came from the North,--brawny and riotous with energy, a man of

concentrated power, who held all the thunderbolts of modern capital in

his great fists and made flour and meat, iron and steel, cunning

chemicals, wood, paint and paper, transforming to endless tools a

disemboweled earth. He was one who saw nothing, knew nothing, sought

nothing but the making and buying of that which sells; who out from the

magic of his hand rolled over miles of iron road, ton upon ton of food

and metal and wood, of coal and oil and lumber, until the thronging of

knotted ways in East and real St. Louis was like the red, festering

ganglia of some mighty heart.

Then from the East and called by the crash of thunderbolts and

forked-flame came the Unwise Man,--unwise by the theft of endless ages,

but as human as anything God ever made. He was the slave for the miracle

maker. It was he that the thunderbolts struck and electrified into

gasping energy. The rasp of his hard breathing shook the midnights of

all this endless valley and the pulse of his powerful arms set the great

nation to trembling.

And then, at last, out of the South, like a still, small voice, came the

third man,--black, with great eyes and greater memories; hesitantly

eager and yet with the infinite softness and ancient calm which come

from that eternal race whose history is not the history of a day, but

of endless ages. Here, surely, was fit meeting-place for these curiously

intent forces, for these epoch-making and age-twisting forces, for these

human feet on their super-human errands.

Yesterday I rode in East St. Louis. It is the kind of place one quickly

recognizes,--tireless and with no restful green of verdure; hard and

uneven of street; crude, cold, and even hateful of aspect; conventional,

of course, in its business quarter, but quickly beyond one sees the ruts

and the hollows, the stench of ill-tamed sewerage, unguarded railroad

crossings, saloons outnumbering churches and churches catering to

saloons; homes impudently strait and new, prostitutes free and happy,

gamblers in paradise, the town "wide open," shameless and frank; great

factories pouring out stench, filth, and flame--these and all other

things so familiar in the world market places, where industry triumphs

over thought and products overwhelm men. May I tell, too, how yesterday

I rode in this city past flame-swept walls and over gray ashes; in

streets almost wet with blood and beside ruins, where the bones of dead

men new-bleached peered out at me in sullen wonder?

Across the river, in the greater city, where bronze St. Louis,--that

just and austere king--looks with angry, fear-swept eyes down from the

rolling heights of Forest Park, which knows him not nor heeds him, there

is something of the same thing, but this city is larger and older and

the forces of evil have had some curbing from those who have seen the

vision and panted for life; but eastward from St. Louis there is a land

of no taxes for great industries; there is a land where you may buy

grafting politicians at far less rate than you would pay for franchises

or privileges in a modern town. There, too, you may escape the buying of

indulgences from the great terminal fist, which squeezes industry out of

St. Louis. In fact, East St. Louis is a paradise for high and frequent

dividends and for the piling up of wealth to be spent in St. Louis and

Chicago and New York and when the world is sane again, across the seas.

So the Unwise Men pouring out of the East,--falling, scrambling, rushing

into America at the rate of a million a year,--ran, walked, and crawled

to this maelstrom of the workers. They garnered higher wage than ever

they had before, but not all of it came in cash. A part, and an

insidious part, was given to them transmuted into whiskey, prostitutes,

and games of chance. They laughed and disported themselves. God! Had not

their mothers wept enough? It was a good town. There was no veil of

hypocrisy here, but a wickedness, frank, ungilded, and open. To be sure,

there were things sometimes to reveal the basic savagery and thin

veneer. Once, for instance, a man was lynched for brawling on the public

square of the county seat; once a mayor who sought to "clean up" was

publicly assassinated; always there was theft and rumors of theft,

until St. Clair County was a hissing in good men's ears; but always,

too, there were good wages and jolly hoodlums and unchecked wassail of

Saturday nights. Gamblers, big and little, rioted in East St. Louis. The

little gamblers used cards and roulette wheels and filched the weekly

wage of the workers. The greater gamblers used meat and iron and undid

the foundations of the world. All the gods of chance flaunted their wild

raiment here, above the brown flood of the Mississippi.

Then the world changed; then civilization, built for culture, rebuilt

itself for wilful murder in Europe, Asia, America, and the Southern

Seas. Hands that made food made powder, and iron for railways was iron

for guns. The wants of common men were forgotten before the groan of

giants. Streams of gold, lost from the world's workers, filtered and

trickled into the hands of gamblers and put new power into the

thunderbolts of East St. Louis.

Wages had been growing before the World War. Slowly but remorselessly

the skilled and intelligent, banding themselves, had threatened the

coffers of the mighty, and slowly the mighty had disgorged. Even the

common workers, the poor and unlettered, had again and again gripped the

sills of the city walls and pulled themselves to their chins; but, alas!

there were so many hands and so many mouths and the feet of the

Disinherited kept coming across the wet paths of the sea to this old El

Dorado.

War brought subtle changes. Wages stood still while prices fattened. It

was not that the white American worker was threatened with starvation,

but it was what was, after all, a more important question,--whether or

not he should lose his front-room and victrola and even the dream of a

Ford car.

There came a whirling and scrambling among the workers,--they fought

each other; they climbed on each others' backs. The skilled and

intelligent, banding themselves even better than before, bargained with

the men of might and held them by bitter threats; the less skilled and

more ignorant seethed at the bottom and tried, as of old, to bring it

about that the ignorant and unlettered should learn to stand together

against both capital and skilled labor.

It was here that there came out of the East a beam of unearthly

light,--a triumph of possible good in evil so strange that the workers

hardly believed it. Slowly they saw the gates of Ellis Island closing,

slowly the footsteps of the yearly million men became fainter and

fainter, until the stream of immigrants overseas was stopped by the

shadow of death at the very time when new murder opened new markets over

all the world to American industry; and the giants with the thunderbolts

stamped and raged and peered out across the world and called for men and

evermore,--men!

The Unwise Men laughed and squeezed reluctant dollars out of the fists

of the mighty and saw in their dream the vision of a day when labor, as

they knew it, should come into its own; saw this day and saw it with

justice and with right, save for one thing, and that was the sound of

the moan of the Disinherited, who still lay without the walls. When they

heard this moan and saw that it came not across the seas, they were at

first amazed and said it was not true; and then they were mad and said

it should not be. Quickly they turned and looked into the red blackness

of the South and in their hearts were fear and hate!

What did they see? They saw something at which they had been taught to

laugh and make sport; they saw that which the heading of every newspaper

column, the lie of every cub reporter, the exaggeration of every press

dispatch, and the distortion of every speech and book had taught them

was a mass of despicable men, inhuman; at best, laughable; at worst, the

meat of mobs and fury.

What did they see? They saw nine and one-half millions of human beings.

They saw the spawn of slavery, ignorant by law and by deviltry, crushed

by insult and debauched by systematic and criminal injustice. They saw a

people whose helpless women have been raped by thousands and whose men

lynched by hundreds in the face of a sneering world. They saw a people

with heads bloody, but unbowed, working faithfully at wages fifty per

cent. lower than the wages of the nation and under conditions which

shame civilization, saving homes, training children, hoping against

hope. They saw the greatest industrial miracle of modern days,--slaves

transforming themselves to freemen and climbing out of perdition by

their own efforts, despite the most contemptible opposition God ever

saw,--they saw all this and what they saw the distraught employers of

America saw, too.

The North called to the South. A scream of rage went up from the cotton

monopolists and industrial barons of the new South. Who was this who

dared to "interfere" with their labor? Who sought to own their black

slaves but they? Who honored and loved "niggers" as they did?

They mobilized all the machinery of modern oppression: taxes, city

ordinances, licenses, state laws, municipal regulations, wholesale

police arrests and, of course, the peculiarly Southern method of the mob

and the lyncher. They appealed frantically to the United States

Government; they groveled on their knees and shed wild tears at the

"suffering" of their poor, misguided black friends, and yet, despite

this, the Northern employers simply had to offer two and three dollars a

day and from one-quarter to one-half a million dark workers arose and

poured themselves into the North. They went to the mines of West

Virginia, because war needs coal; they went to the industries of New

Jersey and Pennsylvania, because war needs ships and iron; they went to

the automobiles of Detroit and the load-carrying of Chicago; and they

went to East St. Louis.

Now there came fear in the hearts of the Unwise Men. It was not that

their wages were lowered,--they went even higher. They received, not

simply, a living wage, but a wage that paid for some of the decencies,

and, in East St. Louis, many of the indecencies of life. What they

feared was not deprivation of the things they were used to and the

shadow of poverty, but rather the definite death of their rising dreams.

But if fear was new-born in the hearts of the Unwise Men, the black man

was born in a house of fear; to him poverty of the ugliest and straitest

type was father, mother, and blood-brother. He was slipping stealthily

northward to escape hunger and insult, the hand of oppression, and the

shadow of death.

Here, then, in the wide valley which Father Marquette saw peaceful and

golden, lazy with fruit and river, half-asleep beneath the nod of

God,--here, then, was staged every element for human tragedy, every

element of the modern economic paradox.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah! That hot, wide plain of East St. Louis is a gripping thing. The

rivers are dirty with sweat and toil and lip, like lakes, along the low

and burdened shores; flatboats ramble and thread among them, and above

the steamers bridges swing on great arches of steel, striding with

mighty grace from shore to shore. Everywhere are brick kennels,--tall,

black and red chimneys, tongues of flame. The ground is littered with

cars and iron, tracks and trucks, boxes and crates, metals and coal and

rubber. Nature-defying cranes, grim elevators rise above pile on pile of

black and grimy lumber. And ever below is the water,--wide and silent,

gray-brown and yellow.

This is the stage for the tragedy: the armored might of the modern world

urged by the bloody needs of the world wants, fevered today by a

fabulous vision of gain and needing only hands, hands, hands! Fear of

loss and greed of gain in the hearts of the giants; the clustered

cunning of the modern workman, skilled as artificer and skilled in the

rhythm of the habit of work, tasting the world's good and panting for

more; fear of poverty and hate of "scabs" in the hearts of the workers;

the dumb yearning in the hearts of the oppressed; the echo of laughter

heard at the foot of the Pyramids; the faithful, plodding slouch of the

laborers; fear of the Shadow of Death in the hearts of black men.

We ask, and perhaps there is no answer, how far may the captain of the

world's industry do his deeds, despite the grinding tragedy of its

doing? How far may men fight for the beginning of comfort, out beyond

the horrid shadow of poverty, at the cost of starving other and what the

world calls lesser men? How far may those who reach up out of the slime

that fills the pits of the world's damned compel men with loaves to

divide with men who starve?

The answers to these questions are hard, but yet one answer looms above

all,--justice lies with the lowest; the plight of the lowest man,--the

plight of the black man--deserves the first answer, and the plight of

the giants of industry, the last.

Little cared East St. Louis for all this bandying of human problems, so

long as its grocers and saloon-keepers flourished and its industries

steamed and screamed and smoked and its bankers grew rich. Stupidity,

license, and graft sat enthroned in the City Hall. The new black folk

were exploited as cheerfully as white Polacks and Italians; the rent of

shacks mounted merrily, the street car lines counted gleeful gains, and

the crimes of white men and black men flourished in the dark. The high

and skilled and smart climbed on the bent backs of the ignorant; harder

the mass of laborers strove to unionize their fellows and to bargain

with employers.

Nor were the new blacks fools. They had no love for nothings in labor;

they had no wish to make their fellows' wage envelopes smaller, but they

were determined to make their own larger. They, too, were willing to

join in the new union movement. But the unions did not want them. Just

as employers monopolized meat and steel, so they sought to monopolize

labor and beat a giant's bargain. In the higher trades they succeeded.

The best electrician in the city was refused admittance to the union and

driven from the town because he was black. No black builder, printer, or

machinist could join a union or work in East St. Louis, no matter what

his skill or character. But out of the stink of the stockyards and the

dust of the aluminum works and the sweat of the lumber yards the willing

blacks could not be kept.

They were invited to join unions of the laborers here and they joined.

White workers and black workers struck at the aluminum works in the fall

and won higher wages and better hours; then again in the spring they

struck to make bargaining compulsory for the employer, but this time

they fronted new things. The conflagration of war had spread to America;

government and court stepped in and ordered no hesitation, no strikes;

the work must go on.

Deeper was the call for workers. Black men poured in and red anger

flamed in the hearts of the white workers. The anger was against the

wielders of the thunderbolts, but here it was impotent because employers

stood with the hand of the government before their faces; it was against

entrenched union labor, which had risen on the backs of the unskilled

and unintelligent and on the backs of those whom for any reason of race

or prejudice or chicane they could beat beyond the bars of competition;

and finally the anger of the mass of white workers was turned toward

these new black interlopers, who seemed to come to spoil their last

dream of a great monopoly of common labor.

These angers flamed and the union leaders, fearing their fury and

knowing their own guilt, not only in the larger and subtler matter of

bidding their way to power across the weakness of their less fortunate

fellows, but also conscious of their part in making East St. Louis a

miserable town of liquor and lust, leaped quickly to ward the gathering

thunder from their own heads. The thing they wanted was even at their

hands: here were black men, guilty not only of bidding for jobs which

white men could have held at war prices, even if they could not fill,

but also guilty of being black! It was at this blackness that the unions

pointed the accusing finger. It was here that they committed the

unpardonable crime. It was here that they entered the Shadow of Hell,

where suddenly from a fight for wage and protection against industrial

oppression East St. Louis became the center of the oldest and nastiest

form of human oppression,--race hatred.

The whole situation lent itself to this terrible transformation.

Everything in the history of the United States, from slavery to Sunday

supplements, from disfranchisement to residence segregation, from

"Jim-Crow" cars to a "Jim-Crow" army draft--all this history of

discrimination and insult festered to make men think and willing to

think that the venting of their unbridled anger against 12,000,000

humble, upstriving workers was a way of settling the industrial tangle

of the ages. It was the logic of the broken plate, which, seared of old

across its pattern, cracks never again, save along the old destruction.

So hell flamed in East St. Louis! The white men drove even black union

men out of their unions and when the black men, beaten by night and

assaulted, flew to arms and shot back at the marauders, five thousand

rioters arose and surged like a crested stormwave, from noonday until

midnight; they killed and beat and murdered; they dashed out the brains

of children and stripped off the clothes of women; they drove victims

into the flames and hanged the helpless to the lighting poles. Fathers

were killed before the faces of mothers; children were burned; heads

were cut off with axes; pregnant women crawled and spawned in dark, wet

fields; thieves went through houses and firebrands followed; bodies were

thrown from bridges; and rocks and bricks flew through the air.

The Negroes fought. They grappled with the mob like beasts at bay. They

drove them back from the thickest cluster of their homes and piled the

white dead on the street, but the cunning mob caught the black men

between the factories and their homes, where they knew they were armed

only with their dinner pails. Firemen, policemen, and militiamen stood

with hanging hands or even joined eagerly with the mob.

It was the old world horror come to life again: all that Jews suffered

in Spain and Poland; all that peasants suffered in France, and Indians

in Calcutta; all that aroused human deviltry had accomplished in ages

past they did in East St. Louis, while the rags of six thousand

half-naked black men and women fluttered across the bridges of the calm

Mississippi.

The white South laughed,--it was infinitely funny--the "niggers" who had

gone North to escape slavery and lynching had met the fury of the mob

which they had fled. Delegations rushed North from Mississippi and

Texas, with suspicious timeliness and with great-hearted offers to take

these workers back to a lesser hell. The man from Greensville,

Mississippi, who wanted a thousand got six, because, after all, the end

was not so simple.

No, the end was not simple. On the contrary, the problem raised by East

St. Louis was curiously complex. The ordinary American, tired of the

persistence of "the Negro problem," sees only another anti-Negro mob and

wonders, not when we shall settle this problem, but when we shall be

well rid of it. The student of social things sees another mile-post in

the triumphant march of union labor; he is sorry that blood and rapine

should mark its march,--but, what will you? War is life!

Despite these smug reasonings the bare facts were these: East St. Louis,

a great industrial center, lost 5,000 laborers,--good, honest,

hard-working laborers. It was not the criminals, either black or white,

who were driven from East St. Louis. They are still there. They will

stay there. But half the honest black laborers were gone. The crippled

ranks of industrial organization in the mid-Mississippi Valley cannot be

recruited from Ellis Island, because in Europe men are dead and maimed,

and restoration, when restoration comes, will raise a European demand

for labor such as this age has never seen. The vision of industrial

supremacy has come to the giants who lead American industry and finance.

But it can never be realized unless the laborers are here to do the

work,--the skilled laborers, the common laborers, the willing laborers,

the well-paid laborers. The present forces, organized however cunningly,

are not large enough to do what America wants; but there is another

group of laborers, 12,000,000 strong, the natural heirs, by every logic

of justice, to the fruits of America's industrial advance. They will be

used simply because they must be used,--but their using means East St.

Louis!

Eastward from St. Louis lie great centers, like Chicago, Indianapolis,

Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburg, Philadelphia, and New York; in every one

of these and in lesser centers there is not only the industrial unrest

of war and revolutionized work, but there is the call for workers, the

coming of black folk, and the deliberate effort to divert the thoughts

of men, and particularly of workingmen, into channels of race hatred

against blacks. In every one of these centers what happened in East St.

Louis has been attempted, with more or less success. Yet the American

Negroes stand today as the greatest strategic group in the world. Their

services are indispensable, their temper and character are fine, and

their souls have seen a vision more beautiful than any other mass of

workers. They may win back culture to the world if their strength can be

used with the forces of the world that make for justice and not against

the hidden hates that fight for barbarism. For fight they must and fight

they will!

Rising on wings we cross again the rivers of St. Louis, winding and

threading between the towers of industry that threaten and drown the

towers of God. Far, far beyond, we sight the green of fields and hills;

but ever below lies the river, blue,--brownish-gray, touched with the

hint of hidden gold. Drifting through half-flooded lowlands, with

shanties and crops and stunted trees, past struggling corn and

straggling village, we rush toward the Battle of the Marne and the West,

from this dread Battle of the East. Westward, dear God, the fire of Thy

Mad World crimsons our Heaven. Our answering Hell rolls eastward from

St. Louis.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here, in microcosm, is the sort of economic snarl that arose continually

for me and my pupils to solve. We could bring to its unraveling little

of the scholarly aloofness and academic calm of most white universities.

To us this thing was Life and Hope and Death!

How should we think such a problem through, not simply as Negroes, but

as men and women of a new century, helping to build a new world? And

first of all, here is no simple question of race antagonism. There are

no races, in the sense of great, separate, pure breeds of men, differing

in attainment, development, and capacity. There are great groups,--now

with common history, now with common interests, now with common

ancestry; more and more common experience and present interest drive

back the common blood and the world today consists, not of races, but of

the imperial commercial group of master capitalists, international and

predominantly white; the national middle classes of the several nations,

white, yellow, and brown, with strong blood bonds, common languages, and

common history; the international laboring class of all colors; the

backward, oppressed groups of nature-folk, predominantly yellow, brown,

and black.

Two questions arise from the work and relations of these groups: how to

furnish goods and services for the wants of men and how equitably and

sufficiently to satisfy these wants. There can be no doubt that we have

passed in our day from a world that could hardly satisfy the physical

wants of the mass of men, by the greatest effort, to a world whose

technique supplies enough for all, if all can claim their right. Our

great ethical question today is, therefore, how may we justly distribute

the world's goods to satisfy the necessary wants of the mass of men.

What hinders the answer to this question? Dislikes, jealousies,

hatreds,--undoubtedly like the race hatred in East St. Louis; the

jealousy of English and German; the dislike of the Jew and the Gentile.

But these are, after all, surface disturbances, sprung from ancient

habit more than from present reason. They persist and are encouraged

because of deeper, mightier currents. If the white workingmen of East

St. Louis felt sure that Negro workers would not and could not take the

bread and cake from their mouths, their race hatred would never have

been translated into murder. If the black workingmen of the South could

earn a decent living under decent circumstances at home, they would not

be compelled to underbid their white fellows.

Thus the shadow of hunger, in a world which never needs to be hungry,

drives us to war and murder and hate. But why does hunger shadow so vast

a mass of men? Manifestly because in the great organizing of men for

work a few of the participants come out with more wealth than they can

possibly use, while a vast number emerge with less than can decently

support life. In earlier economic stages we defended this as the reward

of Thrift and Sacrifice, and as the punishment of Ignorance and Crime.

To this the answer is sharp: Sacrifice calls for no such reward and

Ignorance deserves no such punishment. The chief meaning of our present

thinking is that the disproportion between wealth and poverty today

cannot be adequately accounted for by the thrift and ignorance of the

rich and the poor.

Yesterday we righted one great mistake when we realized that the

ownership of the laborer did not tend to increase production. The world

at large had learned this long since, but black slavery arose again in

America as an inexplicable anachronism, a wilful crime. The freeing of

the black slaves freed America. Today we are challenging another

ownership,-the ownership of materials which go to make the goods we

need. Private ownership of land, tools, and raw materials may at one

stage of economic development be a method of stimulating production and

one which does not greatly interfere with equitable distribution. When,

however, the intricacy and length of technical production increased, the

ownership of these things becomes a monopoly, which easily makes the

rich richer and the poor poorer. Today, therefore, we are challenging

this ownership; we are demanding general consent as to what materials

shall be privately owned and as to how materials shall be used. We are

rapidly approaching the day when we shall repudiate all private property

in raw materials and tools and demand that distribution hinge, not on

the power of those who monopolize the materials, but on the needs of the

mass of men.

Can we do this and still make sufficient goods, justly gauge the needs

of men, and rightly decide who are to be considered "men"? How do we

arrange to accomplish these things today? Somebody decides whose wants

should be satisfied. Somebody organizes industry so as to satisfy these

wants. What is to hinder the same ability and foresight from being used

in the future as in the past? The amount and kind of human ability

necessary need not be decreased,--it may even be vastly increased, with

proper encouragement and rewards. Are we today evoking the necessary

ability? On the contrary, it is not the Inventor, the Manager, and the

Thinker who today are reaping the great rewards of industry, but rather

the Gambler and the Highwayman. Rightly-organized industry might easily

save the Gambler's Profit and the Monopolist's Interest and by paying a

more discriminating reward in wealth and honor bring to the service of

the state more ability and sacrifice than we can today command. If we do

away with interest and profit, consider the savings that could be made;

but above all, think how great the revolution would be when we ask the

mysterious Somebody to decide in the light of public opinion whose wants

should be satisfied. This is the great and real revolution that is

coming in future industry.

But this is not the need of the revolution nor indeed, perhaps, its real

beginning. What we must decide sometime is who are to be considered

"men." Today, at the beginning of this industrial change, we are

admitting that economic classes must give way. The laborers' hire must

increase, the employers' profit must be curbed. But how far shall this

change go? Must it apply to all human beings and to all work throughout

the world?

Certainly not. We seek to apply it slowly and with some reluctance to

white men and more slowly and with greater reserve to white women, but

black folk and brown and for the most part yellow folk we have widely

determined shall not be among those whose needs must justly be heard and

whose wants must be ministered to in the great organization of world

industry.

In the teaching of my classes I was not willing to stop with showing

that this was unfair,--indeed I did not have to do this. They knew

through bitter experience its rank injustice, because they were black.

What I had to show was that no real reorganization of industry could be

permanently made with the majority of mankind left out. These

disinherited darker peoples must either share in the future industrial

democracy or overturn the world.

Of course, the foundation of such a system must be a high, ethical

ideal. We must really envisage the wants of humanity. We must want the

wants of all men. We must get rid of the fascination for exclusiveness.

Here, in a world full of folk, men are lonely. The rich are lonely. We

are all frantic for fellow-souls, yet we shut souls out and bar the ways

and bolster up the fiction of the Elect and the Superior when the great

mass of men is capable of producing larger and larger numbers for every

human height of attainment. To be sure, there are differences between

men and groups and there will ever be, but they will be differences of

beauty and genius and of interest and not necessarily of ugliness,

imbecility, and hatred.

The meaning of America is the beginning of the discovery of the Crowd.

The crowd is not so well-trained as a Versailles garden party of Louis

XIV, but it is far better trained than the Sans-culottes and it has

infinite possibilities. What a world this will be when human

possibilities are freed, when we discover each other, when the stranger

is no longer the potential criminal and the certain inferior!

What hinders our approach to the ideals outlined above? Our profit from

degradation, our colonial exploitation, our American attitude toward the

Negro. Think again of East St. Louis! Think back of that to slavery and

Reconstruction! Do we want the wants of American Negroes satisfied? Most

certainly not, and that negative is the greatest hindrance today to the

reorganization of work and redistribution of wealth, not only in

America, but in the world.

All humanity must share in the future industrial democracy of the world.

For this it must be trained in intelligence and in appreciation of the

good and the beautiful. Present Big Business,--that Science of Human

Wants--must be perfected by eliminating the price paid for waste, which

is Interest, and for Chance, which is Profit, and making all income a

personal wage for service rendered by the recipient; by recognizing no

possible human service as great enough to enable a person to designate

another as an idler or as a worker at work which he cannot do. Above

all, industry must minister to the wants of the many and not to the few,

and the Negro, the Indian, the Mongolian, and the South Sea Islander

must be among the many as well as Germans, Frenchmen, and Englishmen.

In this coming socialization of industry we must guard against that same

tyranny of the majority that has marked democracy in the making of laws.

There must, for instance, persist in this future economics a certain

minimum of machine-like work and prompt obedience and submission. This

necessity is a simple corollary from the hard facts of the physical

world. It must be accepted with the comforting thought that its routine

need not demand twelve hours a day or even eight. With Work for All and

All at Work probably from three to six hours would suffice, and leave

abundant time for leisure, exercise, study, and avocations.

But what shall we say of work where spiritual values and social

distinctions enter? Who shall be Artists and who shall be Servants in

the world to come? Or shall we all be artists and all serve?

\_The Second Coming\_

Three bishops sat in San Francisco, New Orleans, and New York, peering

gloomily into three flickering fires, which cast and recast shuddering

shadows on book-lined walls. Three letters lay in their laps, which

said:

"And thou, Valdosta, in the land of Georgia, art not least among the

princes of America, for out of thee shall come a governor who shall rule

my people."

The white bishop of New York scowled and impatiently threw the letter

into the fire. "Valdosta?" he thought,--"That's where I go to the

governor's wedding of little Marguerite, my white flower,--" Then he

forgot the writing in his musing, but the paper flared red in the

fireplace.

"Valdosta?" said the black bishop of New Orleans, turning uneasily in

his chair. "I must go down there. Those colored folk are acting

strangely. I don't know where all this unrest and moving will lead to.

Then, there's poor Lucy--" And he threw the letter into the fire, but

eyed it suspiciously as it flamed green. "Stranger things than that have

happened," he said slowly, "'and ye shall hear of wars and rumors of

wars ... for nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against

kingdom.'"

In San Francisco the priest of Japan, abroad to study strange lands, sat

in his lacquer chair, with face like soft-yellow and wrinkled parchment.

Slowly he wrote in a great and golden book: "I have been strangely

bidden to the Val d' Osta, where one of those religious cults that swarm

here will welcome a prophet. I shall go and report to Kioto."

So in the dim waning of the day before Christmas three bishops met in

Valdosta and saw its mills and storehouses, its wide-throated and sandy

streets, in the mellow glow of a crimson sun. The governor glared

anxiously up the street as he helped the bishop of New York into his car

and welcomed him graciously.

"I am troubled," said the governor, "about the niggers. They are acting

queerly. I'm not certain but Fleming is back of it."

"Fleming?"

"Yes! He's running against me next term for governor; he's a firebrand;

wants niggers to vote and all that--pardon me a moment, there's a darky

I know--" and he hurried to the black bishop, who had just descended

from the "Jim-Crow" car, and clasped his hand cordially. They talked in

whispers. "Search diligently," said the governor in parting, "and bring

me word again." Then returning to his guest, "You will excuse me, won't

you?" he asked, "but I am sorely troubled! I never saw niggers act so.

They're leaving by the hundreds and those who stay are getting impudent!

They seem to be expecting something. What's the crowd, Jim?"

The chauffeur said that there was some sort of Chinese official in town

and everybody wanted to glimpse him. He drove around another way.

It all happened very suddenly. The bishop of New York, in full

canonicals for the early wedding, stepped out on the rear balcony of his

mansion, just as the dying sun lit crimson clouds of glory in the East

and burned the West.

"Fire!" yelled a wag in the surging crowd that was gathering to

celebrate a southern Christmas-eve; all laughed and ran.

The bishop of New York did not understand. He peered around. Was it that

dark, little house in the far backyard that flamed? Forgetful of his

robes he hurried down,--a brave, white figure in the sunset. He found

himself before an old, black, rickety stable. He could hear the mules

stamping within.

No. It was not fire. It was the sunset glowing through the cracks.

Behind the hut its glory rose toward God like flaming wings of cherubim.

He paused until he heard the faint wail of a child. Hastily he entered.

A white girl crouched before him, down by the very mules' feet, with a

baby in her arms,-a little mite of a baby that wailed weakly. Behind

mother and child stood a shadow. The bishop of New York turned to the

right, inquiringly, and saw a black man in bishop's robes that faintly

re-echoed his own. He turned away to the left and saw a golden Japanese

in golden garb. Then he heard the black man mutter behind him: "But He

was to come the second time in clouds of glory, with the nations

gathered around Him and angels--" at the word a shaft of glorious light

fell full upon the child, while without came the tramping of unnumbered

feet and the whirring of wings.

The bishop of New York bent quickly over the baby. It was black! He

stepped back with a gesture of disgust, hardly listening to and yet

hearing the black bishop, who spoke almost as if in apology:

"She's not really white; I know Lucy--you see, her mother worked for the

governor--" The white bishop turned on his heel and nearly trod on the

yellow priest, who knelt with bowed head before the pale mother and

offered incense and a gift of gold.

Out into the night rushed the bishop of New York. The wings of the

cherubim were folded black against the stars. As he hastened down the

front staircase the governor came rushing up the street steps.

"We are late!" he cried nervously. "The bride awaits!" He hurried the

bishop to the waiting limousine, asking him anxiously: "Did you hear

anything? Do you hear that noise? The crowd is growing strangely on the

streets and there seems to be a fire over toward the East. I never saw

so many people here--I fear violence--a mob--a lynching--I fear--hark!"

What was that which he, too, heard beneath the rhythm of unnumbered

feet? Deep in his heart a wonder grew. What was it? Ah, he knew! It was

music,--some strong and mighty chord. It rose higher as the

brilliantly-lighted church split the night, and swept radiantly toward

them. So high and clear that music flew, it seemed above, around, behind

them. The governor, ashen-faced, crouched in the car; but the bishop

said softly as the ecstasy pulsed in his heart:

"Such music, such wedding music! What choir is it?"

V

"THE SERVANT IN THE HOUSE"

The lady looked at me severely; I glanced away. I had addressed the

little audience at some length on the disfranchisement of my people in

society, politics, and industry and had studiously avoided the while her

cold, green eye. I finished and shook weary hands, while she lay in

wait. I knew what was coming and braced my soul.

"Do you know where I can get a good colored cook?" she asked. I

disclaimed all guilty concupiscence. She came nearer and spitefully

shook a finger in my face.

"Why--won't--Negroes--work!" she panted. "I have given money for years

to Hampton and Tuskegee and yet I can't get decent servants. They won't

try. They're lazy! They're unreliable! They're impudent and they leave

without notice. They all want to be lawyers and doctors and" (she spat

the word in venom) "ladies!"

"God forbid!" I answered solemnly, and then being of gentle birth, and

unminded to strike a defenseless female of uncertain years, I ran; I ran

home and wrote a chapter in my book and this is it.

\* \* \* \* \*

I speak and speak bitterly as a servant and a servant's son, for my

mother spent five or more years of her life as a menial; my father's

family escaped, although grandfather as a boat steward had to fight hard

to be a man and not a lackey. He fought and won. My mother's folk,

however, during my childhood, sat poised on that thin edge between the

farmer and the menial. The surrounding Irish had two chances, the

factory and the kitchen, and most of them took the factory, with all its

dirt and noise and low wage. The factory was closed to us. Our little

lands were too small to feed most of us. A few clung almost sullenly to

the old homes, low and red things crouching on a wide level; but the

children stirred restlessly and walked often to town and saw its

wonders. Slowly they dribbled off,--a waiter here, a cook there, help

for a few weeks in Mrs. Blank's kitchen when she had summer boarders.

Instinctively I hated such work from my birth. I loathed it and shrank

from it. Why? I could not have said. Had I been born in Carolina instead

of Massachusetts I should hardly have escaped the taint of "service."

Its temptations in wage and comfort would soon have answered my

scruples; and yet I am sure I would have fought long even in Carolina,

for I knew in my heart that thither lay Hell.

I mowed lawns on contract, did "chores" that left me my own man, sold

papers, and peddled tea--anything to escape the shadow of the awful

thing that lurked to grip my soul. Once, and once only, I felt the sting

of its talons. I was twenty and had graduated from Fisk with a

scholarship for Harvard; I needed, however, travel money and clothes and

a bit to live on until the scholarship was due. Fortson was a

fellow-student in winter and a waiter in summer. He proposed that the

Glee Club Quartet of Fisk spend the summer at the hotel in Minnesota

where he worked and that I go along as "Business Manager" to arrange for

engagements on the journey back. We were all eager, but we knew nothing

of table-waiting. "Never mind," said Fortson, "you can stand around the

dining-room during meals and carry out the big wooden trays of dirty

dishes. Thus you can pick up knowledge of waiting and earn good tips and

get free board." I listened askance, but I went.

I entered that broad and blatant hotel at Lake Minnetonka with distinct

forebodings. The flamboyant architecture, the great verandas, rich

furniture, and richer dresses awed us mightily. The long loft reserved

for us, with its clean little cots, was reassuring; the work was not

difficult,--but the meals! There were no meals. At first, before the

guests ate, a dirty table in the kitchen was hastily strewn with

uneatable scraps. We novices were the only ones who came to eat, while

the guests' dining-room, with its savors and sights, set our appetites

on edge! After a while even the pretense of meals for us was dropped. We

were sure we were going to starve when Dug, one of us, made a startling

discovery: the waiters stole their food and they stole the best. We

gulped and hesitated. Then we stole, too, (or, at least, they stole and

I shared) and we all fattened, for the dainties were marvelous. You

slipped a bit here and hid it there; you cut off extra portions and gave

false orders; you dashed off into darkness and hid in corners and ate

and ate! It was nasty business. I hated it. I was too cowardly to steal

much myself, and not coward enough to refuse what others stole.

Our work was easy, but insipid. We stood about and watched overdressed

people gorge. For the most part we were treated like furniture and were

supposed to act the wooden part. I watched the waiters even more than

the guests. I saw that it paid to amuse and to cringe. One particular

black man set me crazy. He was intelligent and deft, but one day I

caught sight of his face as he served a crowd of men; he was playing the

clown,--crouching, grinning, assuming a broad dialect when he usually

spoke good English--ah! it was a heartbreaking sight, and he made more

money than any waiter in the dining-room.

I did not mind the actual work or the kind of work, but it was the

dishonesty and deception, the flattery and cajolery, the unnatural

assumption that worker and diner had no common humanity. It was uncanny.

It was inherently and fundamentally wrong. I stood staring and thinking,

while the other boys hustled about. Then I noticed one fat hog, feeding

at a heavily gilded trough, who could not find his waiter. He beckoned

me. It was not his voice, for his mouth was too full. It was his way,

his air, his assumption. Thus Caesar ordered his legionaries or

Cleopatra her slaves. Dogs recognized the gesture. I did not. He may be

beckoning yet for all I know, for something froze within me. I did not

look his way again. Then and there I disowned menial service for me and

my people.

I would work my hands off for an honest wage, but for "tips" and

"hand-me-outs," never! Fortson was a pious, honest fellow, who regarded

"tips" as in the nature of things, being to the manner born; but the

hotel that summer in other respects rather astonished even him. He came

to us much flurried one night and got us to help him with a memorial to

the absentee proprietor, telling of the wild and gay doings of midnights

in the rooms and corridors among "tired" business men and their

prostitutes. We listened wide-eyed and eager and wrote the filth out

manfully. The proprietor did not thank Fortson. He did not even answer

the letter.

When I finally walked out of that hotel and out of menial service

forever, I felt as though, in a field of flowers, my nose had been held

unpleasantly long to the worms and manure at their roots.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Cursed be Canaan!" cried the Hebrew priests. "A servant of servants

shall he be unto his brethren." With what characteristic complacency did

the slaveholders assume that Canaanites were Negroes and their

"brethren" white? Are not Negroes servants? \_Ergo\_! Upon such spiritual

myths was the anachronism of American slavery built, and this was the

degradation that once made menial servants the aristocrats among colored

folk. House servants secured some decencies of food and clothing and

shelter; they could more easily reach their master's ear; their personal

abilities of character became known and bonds grew between slave and

master which strengthened from friendship to love, from mutual service

to mutual blood.

Naturally out of this the West Indian servant climbed out of slavery

into citizenship, for few West Indian masters--fewer Spanish or

Dutch--were callous enough to sell their own children into slavery. Not

so with English and Americans. With a harshness and indecency seldom

paralleled in the civilized world white masters on the mainland sold

their mulatto children, half-brothers and half-sisters, and their own

wives in all but name, into life-slavery by the hundreds and thousands.

They originated a special branch of slave-trading for this trade and the

white aristocrats of Virginia and the Carolinas made more money by this

business during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than in any

other way.

The clang of the door of opportunity thus knelled in the ears of the

colored house servant whirled the whole face of Negro advancement as on

some great pivot. The movement was slow, but vast. When emancipation

came, before and after 1863, the house servant still held advantages. He

had whatever education the race possessed and his white father, no

longer able to sell him, often helped him with land and protection.

Notwithstanding this the lure of house service for the Negro was gone.

The path of salvation for the emancipated host of black folk lay no

longer through the kitchen door, with its wide hall and pillared veranda

and flowered yard beyond. It lay, as every Negro soon knew and knows, in

escape from menial serfdom.

In 1860, 98 per cent of the Negroes were servants and serfs. In 1880, 30

per cent were servants and 65 per cent were serfs. The percentage of

servants then rose slightly and fell again until 21 per cent were in

service in 1910 and, doubtless, much less than 20 per cent today. This

is the measure of our rise, but the Negro will not approach freedom

until this hateful badge of slavery and mediaevalism has been reduced to

less than 10 per cent.

Not only are less than a fifth of our workers servants today, but the

character of their service has been changed. The million menial workers

among us include 300,000 upper servants,--skilled men and women of

character, like hotel waiters, Pullman porters, janitors, and cooks,

who, had they been white, could have called on the great labor movement

to lift their work out of slavery, to standardize their hours, to define

their duties, and to substitute a living, regular wage for personal

largess in the shape of tips, old clothes, and cold leavings of food.

But the labor movement turned their backs on those black men when the

white world dinned in their ears. \_Negroes are servants; servants are

Negroes.\_ They shut the door of escape to factory and trade in their

fellows' faces and battened down the hatches, lest the 300,000 should be

workers equal in pay and consideration with white men.

But, if the upper servants could not escape to modern, industrial

conditions, how much the more did they press down on the bodies and

souls of 700,000 washerwomen and household drudges,--ignorant,

unskilled offal of a millionaire industrial system. Their pay was the

lowest and their hours the longest of all workers. The personal

degradation of their work is so great that any white man of decency

would rather cut his daughter's throat than let her grow up to such a

destiny. There is throughout the world and in all races no greater

source of prostitution than this grade of menial service, and the Negro

race in America has largely escaped this destiny simply because its

innate decency leads black women to choose irregular and temporary

sexual relations with men they like rather than to sell themselves to

strangers. To such sexual morals is added (in the nature of

self-defense) that revolt against unjust labor conditions which

expresses itself in "soldiering," sullenness, petty pilfering,

unreliability, and fast and fruitless changes of masters.

Indeed, here among American Negroes we have exemplified the last and

worst refuge of industrial caste. Menial service is an anachronism,--the

refuse of mediaeval barbarism. Whey, then, does it linger? Why are we

silent about it? Why in the minds of so many decent and up-seeing folks

does the whole Negro problem resolve itself into the matter of their

getting a cook or a maid?

No one knows better than I the capabilities of a system of domestic

service at its best. I have seen children who were spiritual sons and

daughters of their masters, girls who were friends of their mistresses,

and old servants honored and revered. But in every such case the Servant

had transcended the Menial, the Service had been exalted above the Wage.

Now to accomplish this permanently and universally, calls for the same

revolution in household help as in factory help and public service.

While organized industry has been slowly making its help into

self-respecting, well-paid men, and while public service is beginning to

call for the highest types of educated and efficient thinkers, domestic

service lags behind and insists upon seeking to evolve the best types of

men from the worst conditions.

The cause of this perversity, to my mind, is twofold. First, the ancient

high estate of Service, now pitifully fallen, yet gasping for breath;

secondly, the present low estate of the outcasts of the world, peering

with blood-shot eyes at the gates of the industrial heaven.

The Master spoke no greater word than that which said: "Whosoever will

be great among you, let him be your servant!" What is greater than

Personal Service! Surely no social service, no wholesale helping of

masses of men can exist which does not find its effectiveness and beauty

in the personal aid of man to man. It is the purest and holiest of

duties. Some mighty glimmer of this truth survived in those who made the

First Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, the Keepers of the Robes, and the

Knights of the Bath, the highest nobility that hedged an anointed king.

Nor does it differ today in what the mother does for the child or the

daughter for the mother, in all the personal attentions in the

old-fashioned home; this is Service! Think of what Friend has meant, not

simply in spiritual sympathies, but in physical helpfulness. In the

world today what calls for more of love, sympathy, learning, sacrifice,

and long-suffering than the care of children, the preparation of food,

the cleansing and ordering of the home, personal attendance and

companionship, the care of bodies and their raiment--what greater, more

intimate, more holy Services are there than these?

And yet we are degrading these services and loathing them and scoffing

at them and spitting upon them, first, by turning them over to the

lowest and least competent and worst trained classes in the world, and

then by yelling like spoiled children if our babies are neglected, our

biscuits sodden, our homes dirty, and our baths unpoured. Let one

suggest that the only cure for such deeds is in the uplift of the doer

and our rage is even worse and less explicable. We will call them by

their first names, thus blaspheming a holy intimacy; we will confine

them to back doors; we will insist that their meals be no gracious

ceremony nor even a restful sprawl, but usually a hasty, heckled gulp

amid garbage; we exact, not a natural, but a purchased deference, and we

leave them naked to insult by our children and by our husbands.

I remember a girl,--how pretty she was, with the crimson flooding the

old ivory of her cheeks and her gracious plumpness! She had come to the

valley during the summer to "do housework." I met and walked home with

her, in the thrilling shadows, to an old village home I knew well; then

as I turned to leave I learned that she was there alone in that house

for a week-end with only one young white man to represent the family.

Oh, he was doubtless a "gentleman" and all that, but for the first time

in my life I saw what a snare the fowler was spreading at the feet of

the daughters of my people, baited by church and state.

Not alone is the hurt thus offered to the lowly,--Society and Science

suffer. The unit which we seek to make the center of society,--the

Home--is deprived of the help of scientific invention and suggestion. It

is only slowly and by the utmost effort that some small foothold has

been gained for the vacuum cleaner, the washing-machine, the power tool,

and the chemical reagent. In our frantic effort to preserve the last

vestiges of slavery and mediaevalism we not only set out faces against

such improvements, but we seek to use education and the power of the

state to train the servants who do not naturally appear.

Meantime the wild rush from house service, on the part of all who can

scramble or run, continues. The rules of the labor union are designed,

not simply to raise wages, but to guard against any likeness between

artisan and servant. There is no essential difference in ability and

training between a subway guard and a Pullman porter, but between their

union cards lies a whole world.

Yet we are silent. Menial service is not a "social problem." It is not

really discussed. There is no scientific program for its "reform." There

is but one panacea: Escape! Get yourselves and your sons and daughters

out of the shadow of this awful thing! Hire servants, but never be one.

Indeed, subtly but surely the ability to hire at least "a maid" is still

civilization's patent to respectability, while "a man" is the first word

of aristocracy.

All this is because we still consciously and unconsciously hold to the

"manure" theory of social organization. We believe that at the bottom of

organized human life there are necessary duties and services which no

real human being ought to be compelled to do. We push below this mudsill

the derelicts and half-men, whom we hate and despise, and seek to build

above it--Democracy! On such foundations is reared a Theory of

Exclusiveness, a feeling that the world progresses by a process of

excluding from the benefits of culture the majority of men, so that a

gifted minority may blossom. Through this door the modern democrat

arrives to the place where he is willing to allot two able-bodied men

and two fine horses to the task of helping one wizened beldam to take

the morning air.

Here the absurdity ends. Here all honest minds turn back and ask: Is

menial service permanent or necessary? Can we not transfer cooking from

the home to the scientific laboratory, along with the laundry? Cannot

machinery, in the hands of self-respecting and well-paid artisans, do

our cleaning, sewing, moving, and decorating? Cannot the training of

children become an even greater profession than the attending of the

sick? And cannot personal service and companionship be coupled with

friendship and love where it belongs and whence it can never be divorced

without degradation and pain?

In fine, can we not, black and white, rich and poor, look forward to a

world of Service without Servants?

A miracle! you say? True. And only to be performed by the Immortal

Child.

\_Jesus Christ in Texas\_

It was in Waco, Texas.

The convict guard laughed. "I don't know," he said, "I hadn't thought of

that." He hesitated and looked at the stranger curiously. In the solemn

twilight he got an impression of unusual height and soft, dark eyes.

"Curious sort of acquaintance for the colonel," he thought; then he

continued aloud: "But that nigger there is bad, a born thief, and ought

to be sent up for life; got ten years last time--"

Here the voice of the promoter, talking within, broke in; he was bending

over his figures, sitting by the colonel. He was slight, with a sharp

nose.

"The convicts," he said, "would cost us $96 a year and board. Well, we

can squeeze this so that it won't be over $125 apiece. Now if these

fellows are driven, they can build this line within twelve months. It

will be running by next April. Freights will fall fifty per cent. Why,

man, you'll be a millionaire in less than ten years."

The colonel started. He was a thick, short man, with a clean-shaven face

and a certain air of breeding about the lines of his countenance; the

word millionaire sounded well to his ears. He thought--he thought a

great deal; he almost heard the puff of the fearfully costly automobile

that was coming up the road, and he said:

"I suppose we might as well hire them."

"Of course," answered the promoter.

The voice of the tall stranger in the corner broke in here:

"It will be a good thing for them?" he said, half in question.

The colonel moved. "The guard makes strange friends," he thought to

himself. "What's this man doing here, anyway?" He looked at him, or

rather looked at his eyes, and then somehow he felt a warming toward

him. He said:

"Well, at least, it can't harm them; they're beyond that."

"It will do them good, then," said the stranger again.

The promoter shrugged his shoulders. "It will do us good," he said.

But the colonel shook his head impatiently. He felt a desire to justify

himself before those eyes, and he answered: "Yes, it will do them good;

or at any rate it won't make them any worse than they are." Then he

started to say something else, but here sure enough the sound of the

automobile breathing at the gate stopped him and they all arose.

"It is settled, then," said the promoter.

"Yes," said the colonel, turning toward the stranger again. "Are you

going into town?" he asked with the Southern courtesy of white men to

white men in a country town. The stranger said he was. "Then come along

in my machine. I want to talk with you about this."

They went out to the car. The stranger as he went turned again to look

back at the convict. He was a tall, powerfully built black fellow. His

face was sullen, with a low forehead, thick, hanging lips, and bitter

eyes. There was revolt written about his mouth despite the hang-dog

expression. He stood bending over his pile of stones, pounding

listlessly. Beside him stood a boy of twelve,--yellow, with a hunted,

crafty look. The convict raised his eyes and they met the eyes of the

stranger. The hammer fell from his hands.

The stranger turned slowly toward the automobile and the colonel

introduced him. He had not exactly caught his name, but he mumbled

something as he presented him to his wife and little girl, who were

waiting.

As they whirled away the colonel started to talk, but the stranger had

taken the little girl into his lap and together they conversed in low

tones all the way home.

In some way, they did not exactly know how, they got the impression that

the man was a teacher and, of course, he must be a foreigner. The long,

cloak-like coat told this. They rode in the twilight through the lighted

town and at last drew up before the colonel's mansion, with its

ghost-like pillars.

The lady in the back seat was thinking of the guests she had invited to

dinner and was wondering if she ought not to ask this man to stay. He

seemed cultured and she supposed he was some acquaintance of the

colonel's. It would be rather interesting to have him there, with the

judge's wife and daughter and the rector. She spoke almost before she

thought:

"You will enter and rest awhile?"

The colonel and the little girl insisted. For a moment the stranger

seemed about to refuse. He said he had some business for his father,

about town. Then for the child's sake he consented.

Up the steps they went and into the dark parlor where they sat and

talked a long time. It was a curious conversation. Afterwards they did

not remember exactly what was said and yet they all remembered a certain

strange satisfaction in that long, low talk.

Finally the nurse came for the reluctant child and the hostess

bethought herself:

"We will have a cup of tea; you will be dry and tired."

She rang and switched on a blaze of light. With one accord they all

looked at the stranger, for they had hardly seen him well in the

glooming twilight. The woman started in amazement and the colonel half

rose in anger. Why, the man was a mulatto, surely; even if he did not

own the Negro blood, their practised eyes knew it. He was tall and

straight and the coat looked like a Jewish gabardine. His hair hung in

close curls far down the sides of his face and his face was olive, even

yellow.

A peremptory order rose to the colonel's lips and froze there as he

caught the stranger's eyes. Those eyes,--where had he seen those eyes

before? He remembered them long years ago. The soft, tear-filled eyes of

a brown girl. He remembered many things, and his face grew drawn and

white. Those eyes kept burning into him, even when they were turned half

away toward the staircase, where the white figure of the child hovered

with her nurse and waved good-night. The lady sank into her chair and

thought: "What will the judge's wife say? How did the colonel come to

invite this man here? How shall we be rid of him?" She looked at the

colonel in reproachful consternation.

Just then the door opened and the old butler came in. He was an ancient

black man, with tufted white hair, and he held before him a large,

silver tray filled with a china tea service. The stranger rose slowly

and stretched forth his hands as if to bless the viands. The old man

paused in bewilderment, tottered, and then with sudden gladness in his

eyes dropped to his knees, and the tray crashed to the floor.

"My Lord and my God!" he whispered; but the woman screamed: "Mother's

china!"

The doorbell rang.

"Heavens! here is the dinner party!" exclaimed the lady. She turned

toward the door, but there in the hall, clad in her night clothes, was

the little girl. She had stolen down the stairs to see the stranger

again, and the nurse above was calling in vain. The woman felt

hysterical and scolded at the nurse, but the stranger had stretched out

his arms and with a glad cry the child nestled in them. They caught some

words about the "Kingdom of Heaven" as he slowly mounted the stairs with

his little, white burden.

The mother was glad of anything to get rid of the interloper, even for a

moment. The bell rang again and she hastened toward the door, which the

loitering black maid was just opening. She did not notice the shadow of

the stranger as he came slowly down the stairs and paused by the newel

post, dark and silent.

The judge's wife came in. She was an old woman, frilled and powdered

into a semblance of youth, and gorgeously gowned. She came forward,

smiling with extended hands, but when she was opposite the stranger,

somewhere a chill seemed to strike her and she shuddered and cried:

"What a draft!" as she drew a silken shawl about her and shook hands

cordially; she forgot to ask who the stranger was. The judge strode in

unseeing, thinking of a puzzling case of theft.

"Eh? What? Oh--er--yes,--good evening," he said, "good evening." Behind

them came a young woman in the glory of youth, and daintily silked,

beautiful in face and form, with diamonds around her fair neck. She came

in lightly, but stopped with a little gasp; then she laughed gaily and

said:

"Why, I beg your pardon. Was it not curious? I thought I saw there

behind your man"--she hesitated, but he must be a servant, she

argued--"the shadow of great, white wings. It was but the light on the

drapery. What a turn it gave me." And she smiled again. With her came a

tall, handsome, young naval officer. Hearing his lady refer to the

servant, he hardly looked at him, but held his gilded cap carelessly

toward him, and the stranger placed it carefully on the rack.

Last came the rector, a man of forty, and well-clothed. He started to

pass the stranger, stopped, and looked at him inquiringly.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "I beg your pardon,--I think I have met

you?"

The stranger made no answer, and the hostess nervously hurried the

guests on. But the rector lingered and looked perplexed.

"Surely, I know you. I have met you somewhere," he said, putting his

hand vaguely to his head. "You--you remember me, do you not?"

The stranger quietly swept his cloak aside, and to the hostess'

unspeakable relief passed out of the door.

"I never knew you," he said in low tones as he went.

The lady murmured some vain excuse about intruders, but the rector stood

with annoyance written on his face.

"I beg a thousand pardons," he said to the hostess absently. "It is a

great pleasure to be here,--somehow I thought I knew that man. I am sure

I knew him once."

The stranger had passed down the steps, and as he passed, the nurse,

lingering at the top of the staircase, flew down after him, caught his

cloak, trembled, hesitated, and then kneeled in the dust.

He touched her lightly with his hand and said: "Go, and sin no more!"

With a glad cry the maid left the house, with its open door, and turned

north, running. The stranger turned eastward into the night. As they

parted a long, low howl rose tremulously and reverberated through the

night. The colonel's wife within shuddered.

"The bloodhounds!" she said.

The rector answered carelessly:

"Another one of those convicts escaped, I suppose. Really, they need

severer measures." Then he stopped. He was trying to remember that

stranger's name.

The judge's wife looked about for the draft and arranged her shawl. The

girl glanced at the white drapery in the hall, but the young officer was

bending over her and the fires of life burned in her veins.

Howl after howl rose in the night, swelled, and died away. The stranger

strode rapidly along the highway and out into the deep forest. There he

paused and stood waiting, tall and still.

A mile up the road behind a man was running, tall and powerful and

black, with crime-stained face and convicts' stripes upon him, and

shackles on his legs. He ran and jumped, in little, short steps, and his

chains rang. He fell and rose again, while the howl of the hounds rang

louder behind him.

Into the forest he leapt and crept and jumped and ran, streaming with

sweat; seeing the tall form rise before him, he stopped suddenly,

dropped his hands in sullen impotence, and sank panting to the earth. A

greyhound shot out of the woods behind him, howled, whined, and fawned

before the stranger's feet. Hound after hound bayed, leapt, and lay

there; then silently, one by one, and with bowed heads, they crept

backward toward the town.

The stranger made a cup of his hands and gave the man water to drink,

bathed his hot head, and gently took the chains and irons from his feet.

By and by the convict stood up. Day was dawning above the treetops. He

looked into the stranger's face, and for a moment a gladness swept over

the stains of his face.

"Why, you are a nigger, too," he said.

Then the convict seemed anxious to justify himself.

"I never had no chance," he said furtively.

"Thou shalt not steal," said the stranger.

The man bridled.

"But how about them? Can they steal? Didn't they steal a whole year's

work, and then when I stole to keep from starving--" He glanced at the

stranger.

"No, I didn't steal just to keep from starving. I stole to be stealing.

I can't seem to keep from stealing. Seems like when I see things, I just

must--but, yes, I'll try!"

The convict looked down at his striped clothes, but the stranger had

taken off his long coat; he had put it around him and the stripes

disappeared.

In the opening morning the black man started toward the low, log

farmhouse in the distance, while the stranger stood watching him. There

was a new glory in the day. The black man's face cleared up, and the

farmer was glad to get him. All day the black man worked as he had never

worked before. The farmer gave him some cold food.

"You can sleep in the barn," he said, and turned away.

"How much do I git a day?" asked the black man.

The farmer scowled.

"Now see here," said he. "If you'll sign a contract for the season, I'll

give you ten dollars a month."

"I won't sign no contract," said the black man doggedly.

"Yes, you will," said the farmer, threateningly, "or I'll call the

convict guard." And he grinned.

The convict shrank and slouched to the barn. As night fell he looked out

and saw the farmer leave the place. Slowly he crept out and sneaked

toward the house. He looked through the kitchen door. No one was there,

but the supper was spread as if the mistress had laid it and gone out.

He ate ravenously. Then he looked into the front room and listened. He

could hear low voices on the porch. On the table lay a gold watch. He

gazed at it, and in a moment he was beside it,--his hands were on it!

Quickly he slipped out of the house and slouched toward the field. He

saw his employer coming along the highway. He fled back in tenor and

around to the front of the house, when suddenly he stopped. He felt the

great, dark eyes of the stranger and saw the same dark, cloak-like coat

where the stranger sat on the doorstep talking with the mistress of the

house. Slowly, guiltily, he turned back, entered the kitchen, and laid

the watch stealthily where he had found it; then he rushed wildly back

toward the stranger, with arms outstretched.

The woman had laid supper for her husband, and going down from the house

had walked out toward a neighbor's. She was gone but a little while, and

when she came back she started to see a dark figure on the doorsteps

under the tall, red oak. She thought it was the new Negro until he said

in a soft voice:

"Will you give me bread?"

Reassured at the voice of a white man, she answered quickly in her soft,

Southern tones:

"Why, certainly."

She was a little woman, and once had been pretty; but now her face was

drawn with work and care. She was nervous and always thinking, wishing,

wanting for something. She went in and got him some cornbread and a

glass of cool, rich buttermilk; then she came out and sat down beside

him. She began, quite unconsciously, to tell him about herself,--the

things she had done and had not done and the things she had wished for.

She told him of her husband and this new farm they were trying to buy.

She said it was hard to get niggers to work. She said they ought all to

be in the chain-gang and made to work. Even then some ran away. Only

yesterday one had escaped, and another the day before.

At last she gossiped of her neighbors, how good they were and how bad.

"And do you like them all?" asked the stranger.

She hesitated.

"Most of them," she said; and then, looking up into his face and putting

her hand into his, as though he were her father, she said:

"There are none I hate; no, none at all."

He looked away, holding her hand in his, and said dreamily:

"You love your neighbor as yourself?"

She hesitated.

"I try--" she began, and then looked the way he was looking; down under

the hill where lay a little, half-ruined cabin.

"They are niggers," she said briefly.

He looked at her. Suddenly a confusion came over her and she insisted,

she knew not why.

"But they are niggers!"

With a sudden impulse she arose and hurriedly lighted the lamp that

stood just within the door, and held it above her head. She saw his dark

face and curly hair. She shrieked in angry terror and rushed down the

path, and just as she rushed down, the black convict came running up

with hands outstretched. They met in mid-path, and before he could stop

he had run against her and she fell heavily to earth and lay white and

still. Her husband came rushing around the house with a cry and an oath.

"I knew it," he said. "It's that runaway nigger." He held the black man

struggling to the earth and raised his voice to a yell. Down the highway

came the convict guard, with hound and mob and gun. They paused across

the fields. The farmer motioned to them.

"He--attacked--my wife," he gasped.

The mob snarled and worked silently. Right to the limb of the red oak

they hoisted the struggling, writhing black man, while others lifted the

dazed woman. Right and left, as she tottered to the house, she searched

for the stranger with a yearning, but the stranger was gone. And she

told none of her guests.

"No--no, I want nothing," she insisted, until they left her, as they

thought, asleep. For a time she lay still, listening to the departure of

the mob. Then she rose. She shuddered as she heard the creaking of the

limb where the body hung. But resolutely she crawled to the window and

peered out into the moonlight; she saw the dead man writhe. He stretched

his arms out like a cross, looking upward. She gasped and clung to the

window sill. Behind the swaying body, and down where the little,

half-ruined cabin lay, a single flame flashed up amid the far-off shout

and cry of the mob. A fierce joy sobbed up through the terror in her

soul and then sank abashed as she watched the flame rise. Suddenly

whirling into one great crimson column it shot to the top of the sky and

threw great arms athwart the gloom until above the world and behind the

roped and swaying form below hung quivering and burning a great crimson

cross.

She hid her dizzy, aching head in an agony of tears, and dared not look,

for she knew. Her dry lips moved:

"Despised and rejected of men."

She knew, and the very horror of it lifted her dull and shrinking

eyelids. There, heaven-tall, earth-wide, hung the stranger on the

crimson cross, riven and blood-stained, with thorn-crowned head and

pierced hands. She stretched her arms and shrieked.

He did not hear. He did not see. His calm dark eyes, all sorrowful, were

fastened on the writhing, twisting body of the thief, and a voice came

out of the winds of the night, saying:

"This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise!"

VI

OF THE RULING OF MEN

The ruling of men is the effort to direct the individual actions of many

persons toward some end. This end theoretically should be the greatest

good of all, but no human group has ever reached this ideal because of

ignorance and selfishness. The simplest object would be rule for the

Pleasure of One, namely the Ruler; or of the Few--his favorites; or of

many--the Rich, the Privileged, the Powerful. Democratic movements

inside groups and nations are always taking place and they are the

efforts to increase the number of beneficiaries of the ruling. In 18th

century Europe, the effort became so broad and sweeping that an attempt

was made at universal expression and the philosophy of the movement said

that if All ruled they would rule for All and thus Universal Good was

sought through Universal Suffrage.

The unrealized difficulty of this program lay in the widespread

ignorance. The mass of men, even of the more intelligent men, not only

knew little about each other but less about the action of men in groups

and the technique of industry in general. They could only apply

universal suffrage, therefore, to the things they knew or knew

partially: they knew personal and menial service, individual

craftsmanship, agriculture and barter, taxes or the taking of private

property for public ends and the rent of land. With these matters then

they attempted to deal. Under the cry of "Freedom" they greatly relaxed

the grip of selfish interests by restricting menial service, securing

the right of property in handiwork and regulating public taxes;

distributing land ownership and freeing trade and barter.

While they were doing this against stubborn resistance, a whole new

organization of work suddenly appeared. The suddenness of this

"Industrial Revolution" of the 19th century was partly fortuitous--in

the case of Watt's teakettle--partly a natural development, as in the

matter of spinning, but largely the determination of powerful and

intelligent individuals to secure the benefits of privileged persons, as

in the case of foreign slave trade.

The result was on the one hand a vast and unexampled development of

industry. Life and civilization in the late 19th and early 20th century

were Industry in its whole conception, language, and accomplishment: the

object of life was to make goods. Now before this giant aspect of

things, the new democracy stood aghast and impotent. It could not rule

because it did not understand: an invincible kingdom of trade, business,

and commerce ruled the world, and before its threshold stood the Freedom

of 18th century philosophy warding the way. Some of the very ones who

were freed from the tyranny of the Middle Age became the tyrants of the

industrial age.

There came a reaction. Men sneered at "democracy" and politics, and

brought forth Fate and Philanthropy to rule the world--Fate which gave

divine right to rule to the Captains of Industry and their created

Millionaires; Philanthropy which organized vast schemes of relief to

stop at least the flow of blood in the vaster wounds which industry was

making.

It was at this time that the lowest laborers, who worked hardest, got

least and suffered most, began to mutter and rebel, and among these were

the American Negroes. Lions have no historians, and therefore lion hunts

are thrilling and satisfactory human reading. Negroes had no bards, and

therefore it has been widely told how American philanthropy freed the

slave. In truth the Negro revolted by armed rebellion, by sullen refusal

to work, by poison and murder, by running away to the North and Canada,

by giving point and powerful example to the agitation of the

abolitionists and by furnishing 200,000 soldiers and many times as many

civilian helpers in the Civil War. This war was not a war for Negro

freedom, but a duel between two industrial systems, one of which was

bound to fail because it was an anachronism, and the other bound to

succeed because of the Industrial Revolution.

When now the Negro was freed the Philanthropists sought to apply to his

situation the Philosophy of Democracy handed down from the 18th century.

There was a chance here to try democratic rule in a new way, that is,

against the new industrial oppression with a mass of workers who were

not yet in its control. With plenty of land widely distributed, staple

products like cotton, rice, and sugar cane, and a thorough system of

education, there was a unique chance to realize a new modern democracy

in industry in the southern United States which would point the way to

the world. This, too, if done by black folk, would have tended to a new

unity of human beings and an obliteration of human hatreds festering

along the color line.

Efforts were begun. The 14th and 15th amendments gave the right to vote

to white and black laborers, and they immediately established a public

school system and began to attack the land question. The United States

government was seriously considering the distribution of land and

capital--"40 acres and a mule"--and the price of cotton opened an easy

way to economic independence. Co-operative movements began on a large

scale.

But alas! Not only were the former slave-owners solidly arrayed against

this experiment, but the owners of the industrial North saw disaster in

any such beginnings of industrial democracy. The opposition based its

objections on the color line, and Reconstruction became in history a

great movement for the self-assertion of the white race against the

impudent ambition of degraded blacks, instead of, in truth, the rise of

a mass of black and white laborers.

The result was the disfranchisement of the blacks of the South and a

world-wide attempt to restrict democratic development to white races and

to distract them with race hatred against the darker races. This

program, however, although it undoubtedly helped raise the scale of

white labor, in much greater proportion put wealth and power in the

hands of the great European Captains of Industry and made modern

industrial imperialism possible.

This led to renewed efforts on the part of white European workers to

understand and apply their political power to its reform through

democratic control.

Whether known as Communism or Socialism or what not, these efforts are

neither new nor strange nor terrible, but world-old and seeking an

absolutely justifiable human ideal--the only ideal that can be sought:

the direction of individual action in industry so as to secure the

greatest good of all. Marxism was one method of accomplishing this, and

its panacea was the doing away with private property in machines and

materials. Two mighty attacks were made on this proposal. One was an

attack on the fundamental democratic foundation: modern European white

industry does not even theoretically seek the good of all, but simply of

all Europeans. This attack was virtually unanswered--indeed some

Socialists openly excluded Negroes and Asiatics from their scheme. From

this it was easy to drift into that form of syndicalism which asks

socialism for the skilled laborer only and leaves the common laborer in

his bonds.

This throws us back on fundamentals. It compels us again to examine the

roots of democracy.

Who may be excluded from a share in the ruling of men? Time and time

again the world has answered:

The Ignorant

The Inexperienced

The Guarded

The Unwilling

That is, we have assumed that only the intelligent should vote, or those

who know how to rule men, or those who are not under benevolent

guardianship, or those who ardently desire the right.

These restrictions are not arguments for the wide distribution of the

ballot--they are rather reasons for restriction addressed to the

self-interest of the present real rulers. We say easily, for instance,

"The ignorant ought not to vote." We would say, "No civilized state

should have citizens too ignorant to participate in government," and

this statement is but a step to the fact: that no state is civilized

which has citizens too ignorant to help rule it. Or, in other words,

education is not a prerequisite to political control--political control

is the cause of popular education.

Again, to make experience a qualification for the franchise is absurd:

it would stop the spread of democracy and make political power

hereditary, a prerequisite of a class, caste, race, or sex. It has of

course been soberly argued that only white folk or Englishmen, or men,

are really capable of exercising sovereign power in a modern state. The

statement proves too much: only yesterday it was Englishmen of high

descent, or men of "blood," or sovereigns "by divine right" who could

rule. Today the civilized world is being ruled by the descendants of

persons who a century ago were pronounced incapable of ever developing a

self-ruling people. In every modern state there must come to the polls

every generation, and indeed every year, men who are inexperienced in

the solutions of the political problems that confront them and who must

experiment in methods of ruling men. Thus and thus only will

civilization grow.

Again, what is this theory of benevolent guardianship for women, for the

masses, for Negroes--for "lesser breeds without the law"? It is simply

the old cry of privilege, the old assumption that there are those in the

world who know better what is best for others than those others know

themselves, and who can be trusted to do this best.

In fact no one knows himself but that self's own soul. The vast and

wonderful knowledge of this marvelous universe is locked in the bosoms

of its individual souls. To tap this mighty reservoir of experience,

knowledge, beauty, love, and deed we must appeal not to the few, not to

some souls, but to all. The narrower the appeal, the poorer the culture;

the wider the appeal the more magnificent are the possibilities.

Infinite is human nature. We make it finite by choking back the mass of

men, by attempting to speak for others, to interpret and act for them,

and we end by acting for ourselves and using the world as our private

property. If this were all, it were crime enough--but it is not all: by

our ignorance we make the creation of the greater world impossible; we

beat back a world built of the playing of dogs and laughter of children,

the song of Black Folk and worship of Yellow, the love of women and

strength of men, and try to express by a group of doddering ancients the

Will of the World.

There are people who insist upon regarding the franchise, not as a

necessity for the many, but as a privilege for the few. They say of

persons and classes: "They do not need the ballot." This is often said

of women. It is argued that everything which women with the ballot might

do for themselves can be done for them; that they have influence and

friends "at court," and that their enfranchisement would simply double

the number of ballots. So, too, we are told that American Negroes can

have done for them by other voters all that they could possibly do for

themselves with the ballot and much more because the white voters are

more intelligent.

Further than this, it is argued that many of the disfranchised people

recognize these facts. "Women do not want the ballot" has been a very

effective counter war-cry, so much so that many men have taken refuge in

the declaration: "When they want to vote, why, then--" So, too, we are

continually told that the "best" Negroes stay out of politics.

Such arguments show so curious a misapprehension of the foundation of

the argument for democracy that the argument must be continually

restated and emphasized. We must remember that if the theory of

democracy is correct, the right to vote is not merely a privilege, not

simply a method of meeting the needs of a particular group, and least of

all a matter of recognized want or desire. Democracy is a method of

realizing the broadest measure of justice to all human beings. The world

has, in the past, attempted various methods of attaining this end, most

of which can be summed up in three categories:

The method of the benevolent tyrant.

The method of the select few.

The method of the excluded groups.

The method of intrusting the government of a people to a strong ruler

has great advantages when the ruler combines strength with ability,

unselfish devotion to the public good, and knowledge of what that good

calls for. Such a combination is, however, rare and the selection of the

right ruler is very difficult. To leave the selection to force is to put

a premium on physical strength, chance, and intrigue; to make the

selection a matter of birth simply transfers the real power from

sovereign to minister. Inevitably the choice of rulers must fall on

electors.

Then comes the problem, who shall elect. The earlier answer was: a

select few, such as the wise, the best born, the able. Many people

assume that it was corruption that made such aristocracies fail. By no

means. The best and most effective aristocracy, like the best monarchy,

suffered from lack of knowledge. The rulers did not know or understand

the needs of the people and they could not find out, for in the last

analysis only the man himself, however humble, knows his own condition.

He may not know how to remedy it, he may not realize just what is the

matter; but he knows when something hurts and he alone knows how that

hurt feels. Or if sunk below feeling or comprehension or complaint, he

does not even know that he is hurt, God help his country, for it not

only lacks knowledge, but has destroyed the sources of knowledge.

So soon as a nation discovers that it holds in the heads and hearts of

its individual citizens the vast mine of knowledge, out of which it may

build a just government, then more and more it calls those citizens to

select their rulers and to judge the justice of their acts.

Even here, however, the temptation is to ask only for the wisdom of

citizens of a certain grade or those of recognized worth. Continually

some classes are tacitly or expressly excluded. Thus women have been

excluded from modern democracy because of the persistent theory of

female subjection and because it was argued that their husbands or other

male folks would look to their interests. Now, manifestly, most

husbands, fathers, and brothers will, so far as they know how or as they

realize women's needs, look after them. But remember the foundation of

the argument,--that in the last analysis only the sufferer knows his

sufferings and that no state can be strong which excludes from its

expressed wisdom the knowledge possessed by mothers, wives, and

daughters. We have but to view the unsatisfactory relations of the sexes

the world over and the problem of children to realize how desperately we

need this excluded wisdom.

The same arguments apply to other excluded groups: if a race, like the

Negro race, is excluded, then so far as that race is a part of the

economic and social organization of the land, the feeling and the

experience of that race are absolutely necessary to the realization of

the broadest justice for all citizens. Or if the "submerged tenth" be

excluded, then again, there is lost from the world an experience of

untold value, and they must be raised rapidly to a place where they can

speak for themselves. In the same way and for the same reason children

must be educated, insanity prevented, and only those put under the

guardianship of others who can in no way be trained to speak for

themselves.

The real argument for democracy is, then, that in the people we have

the source of that endless life and unbounded wisdom which the rulers of

men must have. A given people today may not be intelligent, but through

a democratic government that recognizes, not only the worth of the

individual to himself, but the worth of his feelings and experiences to

all, they can educate, not only the individual unit, but generation

after generation, until they accumulate vast stores of wisdom. Democracy

alone is the method of showing the whole experience of the race for the

benefit of the future and if democracy tries to exclude women or Negroes

or the poor or any class because of innate characteristics which do not

interfere with intelligence, then that democracy cripples itself and

belies its name.

From this point of view we can easily see the weakness and strength of

current criticism of extension of the ballot. It is the business of a

modern government to see to it, first, that the number of ignorant

within its bounds is reduced to the very smallest number. Again, it is

the duty of every such government to extend as quickly as possible the

number of persons of mature age who can vote. Such possible voters must

be regarded, not as sharers of a limited treasure, but as sources of new

national wisdom and strength.

The addition of the new wisdom, the new points of view, and the new

interests must, of course, be from time to time bewildering and

confusing. Today those who have a voice in the body politic have

expressed their wishes and sufferings. The result has been a smaller or

greater balancing of their conflicting interests. The appearance of new

interests and complaints means disarrangement and confusion to the older

equilibrium. It is, of course, the inevitable preliminary step to that

larger equilibrium in which the interests of no human soul will be

neglected. These interests will not, surely, be all fully realized, but

they will be recognized and given as full weight as the conflicting

interests will allow. The problem of government thereafter would be to

reduce the necessary conflict of human interests to the minimum.

From such a point of view one easily sees the strength of the demand for

the ballot on the part of certain disfranchised classes. When women ask

for the ballot, they are asking, not for a privilege, but for a

necessity. You may not see the necessity, you may easily argue that

women do not need to vote. Indeed, the women themselves in considerable

numbers may agree with you. Nevertheless, women do need the ballot. They

need it to right the balance of a world sadly awry because of its brutal

neglect of the rights of women and children. With the best will and

knowledge, no man can know women's wants as well as women themselves. To

disfranchise women is deliberately to turn from knowledge and grope in

ignorance.

So, too, with American Negroes: the South continually insists that a

benevolent guardianship of whites over blacks is the ideal thing. They

assume that white people not only know better what Negroes need than

Negroes themselves, but that they are anxious to supply these needs. As

a result they grope in ignorance and helplessness. They cannot

"understand" the Negro; they cannot protect him from cheating and

lynching; and, in general, instead of loving guardianship we see anarchy

and exploitation. If the Negro could speak for himself in the South

instead of being spoken for, if he could defend himself instead of

having to depend on the chance sympathy of white citizens, how much

healthier a growth of democracy the South would have.

So, too, with the darker races of the world. No federation of the world,

no true inter-nation--can exclude the black and brown and yellow races

from its counsels. They must equally and according to number act and be

heard at the world's council.

It is not, for a moment, to be assumed that enfranchising women will not

cost something. It will for many years confuse our politics. It may even

change the present status of family life. It will admit to the ballot

thousands of inexperienced persons, unable to vote intelligently. Above

all, it will interfere with some of the present prerogatives of men and

probably for some time to come annoy them considerably.

So, too, Negro enfranchisement meant reconstruction, with its theft and

bribery and incompetency as well as its public schools and enlightened,

social legislation. It would mean today that black men in the South

would have to be treated with consideration, have their wishes respected

and their manhood rights recognized. Every white Southerner, who wants

peons beneath him, who believes in hereditary menials and a privileged

aristocracy, or who hates certain races because of their

characteristics, would resent this.

Notwithstanding this, if America is ever to become a government built on

the broadest justice to every citizen, then every citizen must be

enfranchised. There may be temporary exclusions, until the ignorant and

their children are taught, or to avoid too sudden an influx of

inexperienced voters. But such exclusions can be but temporary if

justice is to prevail.

The principle of basing all government on the consent of the governed is

undenied and undeniable. Moreover, the method of modern democracy has

placed within reach of the modern state larger reserves of efficiency,

ability, and even genius than the ancient or mediaeval state dreamed of.

That this great work of the past can be carried further among all races

and nations no one can reasonably doubt.

Great as are our human differences and capabilities there is not the

slightest scientific reason for assuming that a given human being of any

race or sex cannot reach normal, human development if he is granted a

reasonable chance. This is, of course, denied. It is denied so volubly

and so frequently and with such positive conviction that the majority of

unthinking people seem to assume that most human beings are not human

and have no right to human treatment or human opportunity. All this goes

to prove that human beings are, and must be, woefully ignorant of each

other. It always startles us to find folks thinking like ourselves. We

do not really associate with each other, we associate with our ideas of

each other, and few people have either the ability or courage to

question their own ideas. None have more persistently and dogmatically

insisted upon the inherent inferiority of women than the men with whom

they come in closest contact. It is the husbands, brothers, and sons of

women whom it has been most difficult to induce to consider women

seriously or to acknowledge that women have rights which men are bound

to respect. So, too, it is those people who live in closest contact with

black folk who have most unhesitatingly asserted the utter impossibility

of living beside Negroes who are not industrial or political slaves or

social pariahs. All this proves that none are so blind as those nearest

the thing seen, while, on the other hand, the history of the world is

the history of the discovery of the common humanity of human beings

among steadily-increasing circles of men.

If the foundations of democracy are thus seen to be sound, how are we

going to make democracy effective where it now fails to

function--particularly in industry? The Marxists assert that industrial

democracy will automatically follow public ownership of machines and

materials. Their opponents object that nationalization of machines and

materials would not suffice because the mass of people do not understand

the industrial process. They do not know:

What to do

How to do it

Who could do it best

or

How to apportion the resulting goods.

There can be no doubt but that monopoly of machines and materials is a

chief source of the power of industrial tyrants over the common worker

and that monopoly today is due as much to chance and cheating as to

thrift and intelligence. So far as it is due to chance and cheating, the

argument for public ownership of capital is incontrovertible even though

it involves some interference with long vested rights and inheritance.

This is being widely recognized in the whole civilized world. But how

about the accumulation of goods due to thrift and intelligence--would

democracy in industry interfere here to such an extent as to discourage

enterprise and make impossible the intelligent direction of the mighty

and intricate industrial process of modern times?

The knowledge of what to do in industry and how to do it in order to

attain the resulting goods rests in the hands and brains of the workers

and managers, and the judges of the result are the public. Consequently

it is not so much a question as to whether the world will admit

democratic control here as how can such control be long avoided when the

people once understand the fundamentals of industry. How can

civilization persist in letting one person or a group of persons, by

secret inherent power, determine what goods shall be made--whether bread

or champagne, overcoats or silk socks? Can so vast a power be kept from

the people?

But it may be opportunely asked: has our experience in electing public

officials led us to think that we could run railways, cotton mills, and

department stores by popular vote? The answer is clear: no, it has not,

and the reason has been lack of interest in politics and the tyranny of

the Majority. Politics have not touched the matters of daily life which

are nearest the interests of the people--namely, work and wages; or if

they have, they have touched it obscurely and indirectly. When voting

touches the vital, everyday interests of all, nominations and elections

will call for more intelligent activity. Consider too the vast unused

and misused power of public rewards to obtain ability and genius for the

service of the state. If millionaires can buy science and art, cannot

the Democratic state outbid them not only with money but with the vast

ideal of the common weal?

There still remains, however, the problem of the Majority.

What is the cause of the undoubted reaction and alarm that the citizens

of democracy continually feel? It is, I am sure, the failure to feel the

full significance of the change of rule from a privileged minority to

that of an omnipotent majority, and the assumption that mere majority

rule is the last word of government; that majorities have no

responsibilities, that they rule by the grace of God. Granted that

government should be based on the consent of the governed, does the

consent of a majority at any particular time adequately express the

consent of all? Has the minority, even though a small and unpopular and

unfashionable minority, no right to respectful consideration?

I remember that excellent little high school text book, "Nordhoff's

Politics," where I first read of government, saying this sentence at the

beginning of its most important chapter: "The first duty of a minority

is to become a majority." This is a statement which has its underlying

truth, but it also has its dangerous falsehood; viz., any minority which

cannot become a majority is not worthy of any consideration. But suppose

that the out-voted minority is necessarily always a minority? Women,

for instance, can seldom expect to be a majority; artists must always be

the few; ability is always rare, and black folk in this land are but a

tenth. Yet to tyrannize over such minorities, to browbeat and insult

them, to call that government a democracy which makes majority votes an

excuse for crushing ideas and individuality and self-development, is

manifestly a peculiarly dangerous perversion of the real democratic

ideal. It is right here, in its method and not in its object, that

democracy in America and elsewhere has so often failed. We have

attempted to enthrone any chance majority and make it rule by divine

right. We have kicked and cursed minorities as upstarts and usurpers

when their sole offense lay in not having ideas or hair like ours.

Efficiency, ability, and genius found often no abiding place in such a

soil as this. Small wonder that revolt has come and high-handed methods

are rife, of pretending that policies which we favor or persons that we

like have the anointment of a purely imaginary majority vote.

Are the methods of such a revolt wise, howsoever great the provocation

and evil may be? If the absolute monarchy of majorities is galling and

inefficient, is it any more inefficient than the absolute monarchy of

individuals or privileged classes have been found to be in the past? Is

the appeal from a numerous-minded despot to a smaller, privileged group

or to one man likely to remedy matters permanently? Shall we step

backward a thousand years because our present problem is baffling?

Surely not and surely, too, the remedy for absolutism lies in calling

these same minorities to council. As the king-in-council succeeded the

king by the grace of God, so in future democracies the toleration and

encouragement of minorities and the willingness to consider as "men" the

crankiest, humblest and poorest and blackest peoples, must be the real

key to the consent of the governed. Peoples and governments will not in

the future assume that because they have the brute power to enforce

momentarily dominant ideas, it is best to do so without thoughtful

conference with the ideas of smaller groups and individuals.

Proportionate representation in physical and spiritual form must come.

That this method is virtually coming in vogue we can see by the minority

groups of modern legislatures. Instead of the artificial attempts to

divide all possible ideas and plans between two great parties, modern

legislatures in advanced nations tend to develop smaller and smaller

minority groups, while government is carried on by temporary coalitions.

For a time we inveighed against this and sought to consider it a

perversion of the only possible method of practical democracy. Today we

are gradually coming to realize that government by temporary coalition

of small and diverse groups may easily become the most efficient method

of expressing the will of man and of setting the human soul free. The

only hindrance to the faster development of this government by allied

minorities is the fear of external war which is used again and again to

melt these living, human, thinking groups into inhuman, thoughtless, and

murdering machines.

The persons, then, who come forward in the dawn of the 20th century to

help in the ruling of men must come with the firm conviction that no

nation, race, or sex, has a monopoly of ability or ideas; that no human

group is so small as to deserve to be ignored as a part, and as an

integral and respected part, of the mass of men; that, above all, no

group of twelve million black folk, even though they are at the physical

mercy of a hundred million white majority, can be deprived of a voice in

their government and of the right to self-development without a blow at

the very foundations of all democracy and all human uplift; that the

very criticism aimed today at universal suffrage is in reality a demand

for power on the part of consciously efficient minorities,--but these

minorities face a fatal blunder when they assume that less democracy

will give them and their kind greater efficiency. However desperate the

temptation, no modern nation can shut the gates of opportunity in the

face of its women, its peasants, its laborers, or its socially damned.

How astounded the future world-citizen will be to know that as late as

1918 great and civilized nations were making desperate endeavor to

confine the development of ability and individuality to one sex,--that

is, to one-half of the nation; and he will probably learn that similar

effort to confine humanity to one race lasted a hundred years longer.

The doctrine of the divine right of majorities leads to almost humorous

insistence on a dead level of mediocrity. It demands that all people be

alike or that they be ostracized. At the same time its greatest

accusation against rebels is this same desire to be alike: the

suffragette is accused of wanting to be a man, the socialist is accused

of envy of the rich, and the black man is accused of wanting to be

white. That any one of these should simply want to be himself is to the

average worshiper of the majority inconceivable, and yet of all worlds,

may the good Lord deliver us from a world where everybody looks like his

neighbor and thinks like his neighbor and is like his neighbor.

The world has long since awakened to a realization of the evil which a

privileged few may exercise over the majority of a nation. So vividly

has this truth been brought home to us that we have lightly assumed that

a privileged and enfranchised majority cannot equally harm a nation.

Insane, wicked, and wasteful as the tyranny of the few over the many may

be, it is not more dangerous than the tyranny of the many over the few.

Brutal physical revolution can, and usually does, end the tyranny of the

few. But the spiritual losses from suppressed minorities may be vast and

fatal and yet all unknown and unrealized because idea and dream and

ability are paralyzed by brute force.

If, now, we have a democracy with no excluded groups, with all men and

women enfranchised, what is such a democracy to do? How will it

function? What will be its field of work?

The paradox which faces the civilized world today is that democratic

control is everywhere limited in its control of human interests. Mankind

is engaged in planting, forestry, and mining, preparing food and

shelter, making clothes and machines, transporting goods and folk,

disseminating news, distributing products, doing public and private

personal service, teaching, advancing science, and creating art.

In this intricate whirl of activities, the theory of government has been

hitherto to lay down only very general rules of conduct, marking the

limits of extreme anti-social acts, like fraud, theft, and murder.

The theory was that within these bounds was Freedom--the Liberty to

think and do and move as one wished. The real realm of freedom was found

in experience to be much narrower than this in one direction and much

broader in another. In matters of Truth and Faith and Beauty, the

Ancient Law was inexcusably strait and modern law unforgivably stupid.

It is here that the future and mighty fight for Freedom must and will be

made. Here in the heavens and on the mountaintops, the air of Freedom is

wide, almost limitless, for here, in the highest stretches, individual

freedom harms no man, and, therefore, no man has the right to limit it.

On the other hand, in the valleys of the hard, unyielding laws of matter

and the social necessities of time production, and human intercourse,

the limits on our freedom are stern and unbending if we would exist and

thrive. This does not say that everything here is governed by

incontrovertible "natural" law which needs no human decision as to raw

materials, machinery, prices, wages, news-dissemination, education of

children, etc.; but it does mean that decisions here must be limited by

brute facts and based on science and human wants.

Today the scientific and ethical boundaries of our industrial activities

are not in the hands of scientists, teachers, and thinkers; nor is the

intervening opportunity for decision left in the control of the public

whose welfare such decisions guide. On the contrary, the control of

industry is largely in the hands of a powerful few, who decide for their

own good and regardless of the good of others. The making of the rules

of Industry, then, is not in the hands of All, but in the hands of the

Few. The Few who govern industry envisage, not the wants of mankind, but

their own wants. They work quietly, often secretly, opposing Law, on the

one hand, as interfering with the "freedom of industry"; opposing, on

the other hand, free discussion and open determination of the rules of

work and wealth and wages, on the ground that harsh natural law brooks

no interference by Democracy.

These things today, then, are not matters of free discussion and

determination. They are strictly controlled. Who controls them? Who

makes these inner, but powerful, rules? Few people know. Others assert

and believe these rules are "natural"--a part of our inescapable

physical environment. Some of them doubtless are; but most of them are

just as clearly the dictates of self-interest laid down by the powerful

private persons who today control industry. Just here it is that modern

men demand that Democracy supplant skilfully concealed, but all too

evident, Monarchy.

In industry, monarchy and the aristocracy rule, and there are those who,

calling themselves democratic, believe that democracy can never enter

here. Industry, they maintain, is a matter of technical knowledge and

ability, and, therefore, is the eternal heritage of the few. They point

to the failure of attempts at democratic control in industry, just as we

used to point to Spanish-American governments, and they expose, not

simply the failures of Russian Soviets,--they fly to arms to prevent

that greatest experiment in industrial democracy which the world has yet

seen. These are the ones who say: We must control labor or civilization

will fail; we must control white labor in Europe and America; above all,

we must control yellow labor in Asia and black labor in Africa and the

South, else we shall have no tea, or rubber, or cotton. And yet,--and

yet is it so easy to give up the dream of democracy? Must industry rule

men or may men rule even industry? And unless men rule industry, can

they ever hope really to make laws or educate children or create beauty?

That the problem of the democratization of industry is tremendous, let

no man deny. We must spread that sympathy and intelligence which

tolerates the widest individual freedom despite the necessary public

control; we must learn to select for public office ability rather than

mere affability. We must stand ready to defer to knowledge and science

and judge by result rather than by method; and finally we must face the

fact that the final distribution of goods--the question of wages and

income is an ethical and not a mere mechanical problem and calls for

grave public human judgment and not secrecy and closed doors. All this

means time and development. It comes not complete by instant revolution

of a day, nor yet by the deferred evolution of a thousand years--it

comes daily, bit by bit and step by step, as men and women learn and

grow and as children are trained in Truth.

These steps are in many cases clear: the careful, steady increase of

public democratic ownership of industry, beginning with the simplest

type of public utilities and monopolies, and extending gradually as we

learn the way; the use of taxation to limit inheritance and to take the

unearned increment for public use beginning (but not ending) with a

"single tax" on monopolized land values; the training of the public in

business technique by co-operation in buying and selling, and in

industrial technique by the shop committee and manufacturing guild.

But beyond all this must come the Spirit--the Will to Human Brotherhood

of all Colors, Races, and Creeds; the Wanting of the Wants of All.

Perhaps the finest contribution of current Socialism to the world is

neither its light nor its dogma, but the idea back of its one mighty

word--Comrade!

The Call

In the Land of the Heavy Laden came once a dreary day. And the King, who

sat upon the Great White Throne, raised his eyes and saw afar off how

the hills around were hot with hostile feet and the sound of the mocking

of his enemies struck anxiously on the King's ears, for the King loved

his enemies. So the King lifted up his hand in the glittering silence

and spake softly, saying: "Call the Servants of the King." Then the

herald stepped before the armpost of the throne, and cried: "Thus saith

the High and Mighty One, who inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is

Holy,--the Servants of the King!"

Now, of the servants of the king there were a hundred and forty-four

thousand,--tried men and brave, brawny of arm and quick of wit; aye,

too, and women of wisdom and women marvelous in beauty and grace. And

yet on this drear day when the King called, their ears were thick with

the dust of the enemy, their eyes were blinded with the flashing of his

spears, and they hid their faces in dread silence and moved not, even at

the King's behest. So the herald called again. And the servants cowered

in very shame, but none came forth. But the third blast of the herald

struck upon a woman's heart, afar. And the woman straightway left her

baking and sweeping and the rattle of pans; and the woman straightway

left her chatting and gossiping and the sewing of garments, and the

woman stood before the King, saying: "The servant of thy servants, O

Lord."

Then the King smiled,--smiled wondrously, so that the setting sun burst

through the clouds, and the hearts of the King's men dried hard within

them. And the low-voiced King said, so low that even they that listened

heard not well: "Go, smite me mine enemies, that they cease to do evil

in my sight." And the woman quailed and trembled. Three times she lifted

her eyes unto the hills and saw the heathen whirling onward in their

rage. And seeing, she shrank--three times she shrank and crept to the

King's feet.

"O King," she cried, "I am but a woman."

And the King answered: "Go, then, Mother of Men."

And the woman said, "Nay, King, but I am still a maid." Whereat the King

cried: "O maid, made Man, thou shalt be Bride of God."

And yet the third time the woman shrank at the thunder in her ears, and

whispered: "Dear God, I am black!"

The King spake not, but swept the veiling of his face aside and lifted

up the light of his countenance upon her and lo! it was black.

So the woman went forth on the hills of God to do battle for the King,

on that drear day in the land of the Heavy Laden, when the heathen raged

and imagined a vain thing.

VII

THE DAMNATION OF WOMEN

I remember four women of my boyhood: my mother, cousin Inez, Emma, and

Ide Fuller. They represented the problem of the widow, the wife, the

maiden, and the outcast. They were, in color, brown and light-brown,

yellow with brown freckles, and white. They existed not for themselves,

but for men; they were named after the men to whom they were related and

not after the fashion of their own souls.

They were not beings, they were relations and these relations were

enfilmed with mystery and secrecy. We did not know the truth or believe

it when we heard it. Motherhood! What was it? We did not know or greatly

care. My mother and I were good chums. I liked her. After she was dead I

loved her with a fierce sense of personal loss.

Inez was a pretty, brown cousin who married. What was marriage? We did

not know, neither did she, poor thing! It came to mean for her a litter

of children, poverty, a drunken, cruel companion, sickness, and death.

Why?

There was no sweeter sight than Emma,--slim, straight, and dainty,

darkly flushed with the passion of youth; but her life was a wild, awful

struggle to crush her natural, fierce joy of love. She crushed it and

became a cold, calculating mockery.

Last there was that awful outcast of the town, the white woman, Ide

Fuller. What she was, we did not know. She stood to us as embodied filth

and wrong,--but whose filth, whose wrong?

Grown up I see the problem of these women transfused; I hear all about

me the unanswered call of youthful love, none the less glorious because

of its clean, honest, physical passion. Why unanswered? Because the

youth are too poor to marry or if they marry, too poor to have children.

They turn aside, then, in three directions: to marry for support, to

what men call shame, or to that which is more evil than nothing. It is

an unendurable paradox; it must be changed or the bases of culture will

totter and fall.

The world wants healthy babies and intelligent workers. Today we refuse

to allow the combination and force thousands of intelligent workers to

go childless at a horrible expenditure of moral force, or we damn them

if they break our idiotic conventions. Only at the sacrifice of

intelligence and the chance to do their best work can the majority of

modern women bear children. This is the damnation of women.

All womanhood is hampered today because the world on which it is

emerging is a world that tries to worship both virgins and mothers and

in the end despises motherhood and despoils virgins.

The future woman must have a life work and economic independence. She

must have knowledge. She must have the right of motherhood at her own

discretion. The present mincing horror at free womanhood must pass if we

are ever to be rid of the bestiality of free manhood; not by guarding

the weak in weakness do we gain strength, but by making weakness free

and strong.

The world must choose the free woman or the white wraith of the

prostitute. Today it wavers between the prostitute and the nun.

Civilization must show two things: the glory and beauty of creating life

and the need and duty of power and intelligence. This and this only will

make the perfect marriage of love and work.

God is Love,

Love is God;

There is no God but Love

And Work is His Prophet!

All this of woman,--but what of black women?

The world that wills to worship womankind studiously forgets its darker

sisters. They seem in a sense to typify that veiled Melancholy:

"Whose saintly visage is too bright

To hit the sense of human sight,

And, therefore, to our weaker view

O'er-laid with black."

Yet the world must heed these daughters of sorrow, from the primal black

All-Mother of men down through the ghostly throng of mighty womanhood,

who walked in the mysterious dawn of Asia and Africa; from Neith, the

primal mother of all, whose feet rest on hell, and whose almighty hands

uphold the heavens; all religion, from beauty to beast, lies on her

eager breasts; her body bears the stars, while her shoulders are

necklaced by the dragon; from black Neith down to

"That starr'd Ethiop queen who strove

To set her beauty's praise above

The sea-nymphs,"

through dusky Cleopatras, dark Candaces, and darker, fiercer Zinghas, to

our own day and our own land,--in gentle Phillis; Harriet, the crude

Moses; the sybil, Sojourner Truth; and the martyr, Louise De Mortie.

The father and his worship is Asia; Europe is the precocious,

self-centered, forward-striving child; but the land of the mother is and

was Africa. In subtle and mysterious way, despite her curious history,

her slavery, polygamy, and toil, the spell of the African mother

pervades her land. Isis, the mother, is still titular goddess, in

thought if not in name, of the dark continent. Nor does this all seem to

be solely a survival of the historic matriarchate through which all

nations pass,--it appears to be more than this,--as if the great black

race in passing up the steps of human culture gave the world, not only

the Iron Age, the cultivation of the soil, and the domestication of

animals, but also, in peculiar emphasis, the mother-idea.

"No mother can love more tenderly and none is more tenderly loved than

the Negro mother," writes Schneider. Robin tells of the slave who bought

his mother's freedom instead of his own. Mungo Park writes: "Everywhere

in Africa, I have noticed that no greater affront can be offered a Negro

than insulting his mother. 'Strike me,' cries a Mandingo to his enemy,

'but revile not my mother!'" And the Krus and Fantis say the same. The

peoples on the Zambezi and the great lakes cry in sudden fear or joy:

"O, my mother!" And the Herero swears (endless oath) "By my mother's

tears!" "As the mist in the swamps," cries the Angola Negro, "so lives

the love of father and mother."

A student of the present Gold Coast life describes the work of the

village headman, and adds: "It is a difficult task that he is set to,

but in this matter he has all-powerful helpers in the female members of

the family, who will be either the aunts or the sisters or the cousins

or the nieces of the headman, and as their interests are identical with

his in every particular, the good women spontaneously train up their

children to implicit obedience to the headman, whose rule in the family

thus becomes a simple and an easy matter. 'The hand that rocks the

cradle rules the world.' What a power for good in the native state

system would the mothers of the Gold Coast and Ashanti become by

judicious training upon native lines!"

Schweinfurth declares of one tribe: "A bond between mother and child

which lasts for life is the measure of affection shown among the Dyoor"

and Ratzel adds:

"Agreeable to the natural relation the mother stands first among the

chief influences affecting the children. From the Zulus to the Waganda,

we find the mother the most influential counsellor at the court of

ferocious sovereigns, like Chaka or Mtesa; sometimes sisters take her

place. Thus even with chiefs who possess wives by hundreds the bonds of

blood are the strongest and that the woman, though often heavily

burdened, is in herself held in no small esteem among the Negroes is

clear from the numerous Negro queens, from the medicine women, from the

participation in public meetings permitted to women by many Negro

peoples."

As I remember through memories of others, backward among my own family,

it is the mother I ever recall,--the little, far-off mother of my

grandmothers, who sobbed her life away in song, longing for her lost

palm-trees and scented waters; the tall and bronzen grandmother, with

beaked nose and shrewish eyes, who loved and scolded her black and

laughing husband as he smoked lazily in his high oak chair; above all,

my own mother, with all her soft brownness,--the brown velvet of her

skin, the sorrowful black-brown of her eyes, and the tiny brown-capped

waves of her midnight hair as it lay new parted on her forehead. All the

way back in these dim distances it is mothers and mothers of mothers who

seem to count, while fathers are shadowy memories.

Upon this African mother-idea, the westward slave trade and American

slavery struck like doom. In the cruel exigencies of the traffic in men

and in the sudden, unprepared emancipation the great pendulum of social

equilibrium swung from a time, in 1800,--when America had but eight or

less black women to every ten black men,--all too swiftly to a day, in

1870,--when there were nearly eleven women to ten men in our Negro

population. This was but the outward numerical fact of social

dislocation; within lay polygamy, polyandry, concubinage, and moral

degradation. They fought against all this desperately, did these black

slaves in the West Indies, especially among the half-free artisans; they

set up their ancient household gods, and when Toussaint and Cristophe

founded their kingdom in Haiti, it was based on old African tribal ties

and beneath it was the mother-idea.

The crushing weight of slavery fell on black women. Under it there was

no legal marriage, no legal family, no legal control over children. To

be sure, custom and religion replaced here and there what the law

denied, yet one has but to read advertisements like the following to see

the hell beneath the system:

"One hundred dollars reward will be given for my two fellows, Abram

and Frank. Abram has a wife at Colonel Stewart's, in Liberty

County, and a mother at Thunderbolt, and a sister in Savannah.

"WILLIAM ROBERTS."

"Fifty dollars reward--Ran away from the subscriber a Negro girl

named Maria. She is of a copper color, between thirteen and

fourteen years of age--bareheaded and barefooted. She is small for

her age--very sprightly and very likely. She stated she was going

to see her mother at Maysville.

"SANFORD THOMSON."

"Fifty dollars reward--Ran away from the subscriber his Negro man

Pauladore, commonly called Paul. I understand General R.Y. Hayne

has purchased his wife and children from H.L. Pinckney, Esq., and

has them now on his plantation at Goose Creek, where, no doubt, the

fellow is frequently lurking.

"T. DAVIS."

The Presbyterian synod of Kentucky said to the churches under its care

in 1835: "Brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and

wives, are torn asunder and permitted to see each other no more. These

acts are daily occurring in the midst of us. The shrieks and agony often

witnessed on such occasions proclaim, with a trumpet tongue, the

iniquity of our system. There is not a neighborhood where these

heartrending scenes are not displayed. There is not a village or road

that does not behold the sad procession of manacled outcasts whose

mournful countenances tell that they are exiled by force from all that

their hearts hold dear."

A sister of a president of the United States declared: "We Southern

ladies are complimented with the names of wives, but we are only the

mistresses of seraglios."

Out of this, what sort of black women could be born into the world of

today? There are those who hasten to answer this query in scathing terms

and who say lightly and repeatedly that out of black slavery came

nothing decent in womanhood; that adultery and uncleanness were their

heritage and are their continued portion.

Fortunately so exaggerated a charge is humanly impossible of truth. The

half-million women of Negro descent who lived at the beginning of the

19th century had become the mothers of two and one-fourth million

daughters at the time of the Civil War and five million grand-daughters

in 1910. Can all these women be vile and the hunted race continue to

grow in wealth and character? Impossible. Yet to save from the past the

shreds and vestiges of self-respect has been a terrible task. I most

sincerely doubt if any other race of women could have brought its

fineness up through so devilish a fire.

Alexander Crummell once said of his sister in the blood: "In her

girlhood all the delicate tenderness of her sex has been rudely

outraged. In the field, in the rude cabin, in the press-room, in the

factory she was thrown into the companionship of coarse and ignorant

men. No chance was given her for delicate reserve or tender modesty.

From her childhood she was the doomed victim of the grossest passion.

All the virtues of her sex were utterly ignored. If the instinct of

chastity asserted itself, then she had to fight like a tiger for the

ownership and possession of her own person and ofttimes had to suffer

pain and lacerations for her virtuous self-assertion. When she reached

maturity, all the tender instincts of her womanhood were ruthlessly

violated. At the age of marriage,--always prematurely anticipated under

slavery--she was mated as the stock of the plantation were mated, not to

be the companion of a loved and chosen husband, but to be the breeder of

human cattle for the field or the auction block."

Down in such mire has the black motherhood of this race

struggled,--starving its own wailing offspring to nurse to the world

their swaggering masters; welding for its children chains which

affronted even the moral sense of an unmoral world. Many a man and woman

in the South have lived in wedlock as holy as Adam and Eve and brought

forth their brown and golden children, but because the darker woman was

helpless, her chivalrous and whiter mate could cast her off at his

pleasure and publicly sneer at the body he had privately blasphemed.

I shall forgive the white South much in its final judgment day: I shall

forgive its slavery, for slavery is a world-old habit; I shall forgive

its fighting for a well-lost cause, and for remembering that struggle

with tender tears; I shall forgive its so-called "pride of race," the

passion of its hot blood, and even its dear, old, laughable strutting

and posing; but one thing I shall never forgive, neither in this world

nor the world to come: its wanton and continued and persistent insulting

of the black womanhood which it sought and seeks to prostitute to its

lust. I cannot forget that it is such Southern gentlemen into whose

hands smug Northern hypocrites of today are seeking to place our women's

eternal destiny,--men who insist upon withholding from my mother and

wife and daughter those signs and appellations of courtesy and respect

which elsewhere he withholds only from bawds and courtesans.

The result of this history of insult and degradation has been both

fearful and glorious. It has birthed the haunting prostitute, the

brawler, and the beast of burden; but it has also given the world an

efficient womanhood, whose strength lies in its freedom and whose

chastity was won in the teeth of temptation and not in prison and

swaddling clothes.

To no modern race does its women mean so much as to the Negro nor come

so near to the fulfilment of its meaning. As one of our women writes:

"Only the black woman can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet,

undisputed dignity of my womanhood, without violence and without suing

or special patronage, then and there the whole Negro race enters with

me.'"

They came first, in earlier days, like foam flashing on dark, silent

waters,--bits of stern, dark womanhood here and there tossed almost

carelessly aloft to the world's notice. First and naturally they assumed

the panoply of the ancient African mother of men, strong and black,

whose very nature beat back the wilderness of oppression and contempt.

Such a one was that cousin of my grandmother, whom western Massachusetts

remembers as "Mum Bett." Scarred for life by a blow received in defense

of a sister, she ran away to Great Barrington and was the first slave,

or one of the first, to be declared free under the Bill of Rights of

1780. The son of the judge who freed her, writes:

"Even in her humble station, she had, when occasion required it, an

air of command which conferred a degree of dignity and gave her an

ascendancy over those of her rank, which is very unusual in persons

of any rank or color. Her determined and resolute character, which

enabled her to limit the ravages of Shay's mob, was manifested in

her conduct and deportment during her whole life. She claimed no

distinction, but it was yielded to her from her superior

experience, energy, skill, and sagacity. Having known this woman as

familiarly as I knew either of my parents, I cannot believe in the

moral or physical inferiority of the race to which she belonged.

The degradation of the African must have been otherwise caused than

by natural inferiority."

It was such strong women that laid the foundations of the great Negro

church of today, with its five million members and ninety millions of

dollars in property. One of the early mothers of the church, Mary Still,

writes thus quaintly, in the forties:

"When we were as castouts and spurned from the large churches,

driven from our knees, pointed at by the proud, neglected by the

careless, without a place of worship, Allen, faithful to the

heavenly calling, came forward and laid the foundation of this

connection. The women, like the women at the sepulcher, were early

to aid in laying the foundation of the temple and in helping to

carry up the noble structure and in the name of their God set up

their banner; most of our aged mothers are gone from this to a

better state of things. Yet some linger still on their staves,

watching with intense interest the ark as it moves over the

tempestuous waves of opposition and ignorance....

"But the labors of these women stopped not here, for they knew well

that they were subject to affliction and death. For the purpose of

mutual aid, they banded themselves together in society capacity,

that they might be better able to administer to each others'

sufferings and to soften their own pillows. So we find the females

in the early history of the church abounding in good works and in

acts of true benevolence."

From such spiritual ancestry came two striking figures of

war-time,--Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

For eight or ten years previous to the breaking out of the Civil War,

Harriet Tubman was a constant attendant at anti-slavery conventions,

lectures, and other meetings; she was a black woman of medium size,

smiling countenance, with her upper front teeth gone, attired in coarse

but neat clothes, and carrying always an old-fashioned reticule at her

side. Usually as soon as she sat down she would drop off in sound sleep.

She was born a slave in Maryland, in 1820, bore the marks of the lash on

her flesh; and had been made partially deaf, and perhaps to some degree

mentally unbalanced by a blow on the head in childhood. Yet she was one

of the most important agents of the Underground Railroad and a leader of

fugitive slaves. She ran away in 1849 and went to Boston in 1854, where

she was welcomed into the homes of the leading abolitionists and where

every one listened with tense interest to her strange stories. She was

absolutely illiterate, with no knowledge of geography, and yet year

after year she penetrated the slave states and personally led North over

three hundred fugitives without losing a single one. A standing reward

of $10,000 was offered for her, but as she said: "The whites cannot

catch us, for I was born with the charm, and the Lord has given me the

power." She was one of John Brown's closest advisers and only severe

sickness prevented her presence at Harper's Ferry.

When the war cloud broke, she hastened to the front, flitting down along

her own mysterious paths, haunting the armies in the field, and serving

as guide and nurse and spy. She followed Sherman in his great march to

the sea and was with Grant at Petersburg, and always in the camps the

Union officers silently saluted her.

The other woman belonged to a different type,--a tall, gaunt, black,

unsmiling sybil, weighted with the woe of the world. She ran away from

slavery and giving up her own name took the name of Sojourner Truth. She

says: "I can remember when I was a little, young girl, how my old mammy

would sit out of doors in the evenings and look up at the stars and

groan, and I would say, 'Mammy, what makes you groan so?' And she would

say, 'I am groaning to think of my poor children; they do not know where

I be and I don't know where they be. I look up at the stars and they

look up at the stars!'"

Her determination was founded on unwavering faith in ultimate good.

Wendell Phillips says that he was once in Faneuil Hall, when Frederick

Douglass was one of the chief speakers. Douglass had been describing the

wrongs of the Negro race and as he proceeded he grew more and more

excited and finally ended by saying that they had no hope of justice

from the whites, no possible hope except in their own right arms. It

must come to blood! They must fight for themselves. Sojourner Truth was

sitting, tall and dark, on the very front seat facing the platform, and

in the hush of feeling when Douglass sat down she spoke out in her deep,

peculiar voice, heard all over the hall:

"Frederick, is God dead?"

Such strong, primitive types of Negro womanhood in America seem to some

to exhaust its capabilities. They know less of a not more worthy, but a

finer type of black woman wherein trembles all of that delicate sense of

beauty and striving for self-realization, which is as characteristic of

the Negro soul as is its quaint strength and sweet laughter. George

Washington wrote in grave and gentle courtesy to a Negro woman, in 1776,

that he would "be happy to see" at his headquarters at any time, a

person "to whom nature has been so liberal and beneficial in her

dispensations." This child, Phillis Wheatley, sang her trite and halting

strain to a world that wondered and could not produce her like. Measured

today her muse was slight and yet, feeling her striving spirit, we call

to her still in her own words:

"Through thickest glooms look back, immortal shade."

Perhaps even higher than strength and art loom human sympathy and

sacrifice as characteristic of Negro womanhood. Long years ago, before

the Declaration of Independence, Kate Ferguson was born in New York.

Freed, widowed, and bereaved of her children before she was twenty, she

took the children of the streets of New York, white and black, to her

empty arms, taught them, found them homes, and with Dr. Mason of Murray

Street Church established the first modern Sunday School in Manhattan.

Sixty years later came Mary Shadd up out of Delaware. She was tall and

slim, of that ravishing dream-born beauty,--that twilight of the races

which we call mulatto. Well-educated, vivacious, with determination

shining from her sharp eyes, she threw herself singlehanded into the

great Canadian pilgrimage when thousands of hunted black men hurried

northward and crept beneath the protection of the lion's paw. She became

teacher, editor, and lecturer; tramping afoot through winter snows,

pushing without blot or blemish through crowd and turmoil to conventions

and meetings, and finally becoming recruiting agent for the United

States government in gathering Negro soldiers in the West.

After the war the sacrifice of Negro women for freedom and uplift is one

of the finest chapters in their history. Let one life typify all: Louise

De Mortie, a free-born Virginia girl, had lived most of her life in

Boston. Her high forehead, swelling lips, and dark eyes marked her for a

woman of feeling and intellect. She began a successful career as a

public reader. Then came the War and the Call. She went to the orphaned

colored children of New Orleans,--out of freedom into insult and

oppression and into the teeth of the yellow fever. She toiled and

dreamed. In 1887 she had raised money and built an orphan home and that

same year, in the thirty-fourth year of her young life, she died, saying

simply: "I belong to God."

As I look about me today in this veiled world of mine, despite the

noisier and more spectacular advance of my brothers, I instinctively

feel and know that it is the five million women of my race who really

count. Black women (and women whose grandmothers were black) are today

furnishing our teachers; they are the main pillars of those social

settlements which we call churches; and they have with small doubt

raised three-fourths of our church property. If we have today, as seems

likely, over a billion dollars of accumulated goods, who shall say how

much of it has been wrung from the hearts of servant girls and

washerwomen and women toilers in the fields? As makers of two million

homes these women are today seeking in marvelous ways to show forth our

strength and beauty and our conception of the truth.

In the United States in 1910 there were 4,931,882 women of Negro

descent; over twelve hundred thousand of these were children, another

million were girls and young women under twenty, and two and a

half-million were adults. As a mass these women were unlettered,--a

fourth of those from fifteen to twenty-five years of age were unable to

write. These women are passing through, not only a moral, but an

economic revolution. Their grandmothers married at twelve and fifteen,

but twenty-seven per cent of these women today who have passed fifteen

are still single.

Yet these black women toil and toil hard. There were in 1910 two and a

half million Negro homes in the United States. Out of these homes walked

daily to work two million women and girls over ten years of age,--over

half of the colored female population as against a fifth in the case of

white women. These, then, are a group of workers, fighting for their

daily bread like men; independent and approaching economic freedom! They

furnished a million farm laborers, 80,000 farmers, 22,000 teachers,

600,000 servants and washerwomen, and 50,000 in trades and

merchandizing.

The family group, however, which is the ideal of the culture with which

these folk have been born, is not based on the idea of an economically

independent working mother. Rather its ideal harks back to the sheltered

harem with the mother emerging at first as nurse and homemaker, while

the man remains the sole breadwinner. What is the inevitable result of

the clash of such ideals and such facts in the colored group? Broken

families.

Among native white women one in ten is separated from her husband by

death, divorce, or desertion. Among Negroes the ratio is one in seven.

Is the cause racial? No, it is economic, because there is the same high

ratio among the white foreign-born. The breaking up of the present

family is the result of modern working and sex conditions and it hits

the laborers with terrible force. The Negroes are put in a peculiarly

difficult position, because the wage of the male breadwinner is below

the standard, while the openings for colored women in certain lines of

domestic work, and now in industries, are many. Thus while toil holds

the father and brother in country and town at low wages, the sisters and

mothers are called to the city. As a result the Negro women outnumber

the men nine or ten to eight in many cities, making what Charlotte

Gilman bluntly calls "cheap women."

What shall we say to this new economic equality in a great laboring

class? Some people within and without the race deplore it. "Back to the

homes with the women," they cry, "and higher wage for the men." But how

impossible this is has been shown by war conditions. Cessation of

foreign migration has raised Negro men's wages, to be sure--but it has

not only raised Negro women's wages, it has opened to them a score of

new avenues of earning a living. Indeed, here, in microcosm and with

differences emphasizing sex equality, is the industrial history of labor

in the 19th and 20th centuries. We cannot abolish the new economic

freedom of women. We cannot imprison women again in a home or require

them all on pain of death to be nurses and housekeepers.

What is today the message of these black women to America and to the

world? The uplift of women is, next to the problem of the color line and

the peace movement, our greatest modern cause. When, now, two of these

movements--woman and color--combine in one, the combination has deep

meaning.

In other years women's way was clear: to be beautiful, to be petted, to

bear children. Such has been their theoretic destiny and if perchance

they have been ugly, hurt, and barren, that has been forgotten with

studied silence. In partial compensation for this narrowed destiny the

white world has lavished its politeness on its womankind,--its chivalry

and bows, its uncoverings and courtesies--all the accumulated homage

disused for courts and kings and craving exercise. The revolt of white

women against this preordained destiny has in these latter days reached

splendid proportions, but it is the revolt of an aristocracy of brains

and ability,--the middle class and rank and file still plod on in the

appointed path, paid by the homage, the almost mocking homage, of men.

From black women of America, however, (and from some others, too, but

chiefly from black women and their daughters' daughters) this gauze has

been withheld and without semblance of such apology they have been

frankly trodden under the feet of men. They are and have been objected

to, apparently for reasons peculiarly exasperating to reasoning human

beings. When in this world a man comes forward with a thought, a deed, a

vision, we ask not, how does he look,--but what is his message? It is of

but passing interest whether or not the messenger is beautiful or

ugly,--the \_message\_ is the thing. This, which is axiomatic among men,

has been in past ages but partially true if the messenger was a woman.

The world still wants to ask that a woman primarily be pretty and if she

is not, the mob pouts and asks querulously, "What else are women for?"

Beauty "is its own excuse for being," but there are other excuses, as

most men know, and when the white world objects to black women because

it does not consider them beautiful, the black world of right asks two

questions: "What is beauty?" and, "Suppose you think them ugly, what

then? If ugliness and unconventionality and eccentricity of face and

deed do not hinder men from doing the world's work and reaping the

world's reward, why should it hinder women?"

Other things being equal, all of us, black and white, would prefer to be

beautiful in face and form and suitably clothed; but most of us are not

so, and one of the mightiest revolts of the century is against the

devilish decree that no woman is a woman who is not by present standards

a beautiful woman. This decree the black women of America have in large

measure escaped from the first. Not being expected to be merely

ornamental, they have girded themselves for work, instead of adorning

their bodies only for play. Their sturdier minds have concluded that if

a woman be clean, healthy, and educated, she is as pleasing as God wills

and far more useful than most of her sisters. If in addition to this she

is pink and white and straight-haired, and some of her fellow-men prefer

this, well and good; but if she is black or brown and crowned in curled

mists (and this to us is the most beautiful thing on earth), this is

surely the flimsiest excuse for spiritual incarceration or banishment.

The very attempt to do this in the case of Negro Americans has strangely

over-reached itself. By so much as the defective eyesight of the white

world rejects black women as beauties, by so much the more it needs them

as human beings,--an enviable alternative, as many a white woman knows.

Consequently, for black women alone, as a group, "handsome is that

handsome does" and they are asked to be no more beautiful than God made

them, but they are asked to be efficient, to be strong, fertile,

muscled, and able to work. If they marry, they must as independent

workers be able to help support their children, for their men are paid

on a scale which makes sole support of the family often impossible.

On the whole, colored working women are paid as well as white working

women for similar work, save in some higher grades, while colored men

get from one-fourth to three-fourths less than white men. The result is

curious and three-fold: the economic independence of black women is

increased, the breaking up of Negro families must be more frequent, and

the number of illegitimate children is decreased more slowly among them

than other evidences of culture are increased, just as was once true in

Scotland and Bavaria.

What does this mean? It forecasts a mighty dilemma which the whole world

of civilization, despite its will, must one time frankly face: the

unhusbanded mother or the childless wife. God send us a world with

woman's freedom and married motherhood inextricably wed, but until He

sends it, I see more of future promise in the betrayed girl-mothers of

the black belt than in the childless wives of the white North, and I

have more respect for the colored servant who yields to her frank

longing for motherhood than for her white sister who offers up children

for clothes. Out of a sex freedom that today makes us shudder will come

in time a day when we will no longer pay men for work they do not do,

for the sake of their harem; we will pay women what they earn and insist

on their working and earning it; we will allow those persons to vote who

know enough to vote, whether they be black or female, white or male; and

we will ward race suicide, not by further burdening the over-burdened,

but by honoring motherhood, even when the sneaking father shirks his

duty.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Wait till the lady passes," said a Nashville white boy.

"She's no lady; she's a nigger," answered another.

So some few women are born free, and some amid insult and scarlet

letters achieve freedom; but our women in black had freedom thrust

contemptuously upon them. With that freedom they are buying an

untrammeled independence and dear as is the price they pay for it, it

will in the end be worth every taunt and groan. Today the dreams of the

mothers are coming true. We have still our poverty and degradation, our

lewdness and our cruel toil; but we have, too, a vast group of women of

Negro blood who for strength of character, cleanness of soul, and

unselfish devotion of purpose, is today easily the peer of any group of

women in the civilized world. And more than that, in the great rank and

file of our five million women we have the up-working of new

revolutionary ideals, which must in time have vast influence on the

thought and action of this land.

For this, their promise, and for their hard past, I honor the women of

my race. Their beauty,--their dark and mysterious beauty of midnight

eyes, crumpled hair, and soft, full-featured faces--is perhaps more to

me than to you, because I was born to its warm and subtle spell; but

their worth is yours as well as mine. No other women on earth could

have emerged from the hell of force and temptation which once engulfed

and still surrounds black women in America with half the modesty and

womanliness that they retain. I have always felt like bowing myself

before them in all abasement, searching to bring some tribute to these

long-suffering victims, these burdened sisters of mine, whom the world,

the wise, white world, loves to affront and ridicule and wantonly to

insult. I have known the women of many lands and nations,--I have known

and seen and lived beside them, but none have I known more sweetly

feminine, more unswervingly loyal, more desperately earnest, and more

instinctively pure in body and in soul than the daughters of my black

mothers. This, then,--a little thing--to their memory and inspiration.

\_Children of the Moon\_

I am dead;

Yet somehow, somewhere,

In Time's weird contradiction, I

May tell of that dread deed, wherewith

I brought to Children of the Moon

Freedom and vast salvation.

I was a woman born,

And trod the streaming street,

That ebbs and flows from Harlem's hills,

Through caves and cañons limned in light,

Down to the twisting sea.

That night of nights,

I stood alone and at the End,

Until the sudden highway to the moon,

Golden in splendor,

Became too real to doubt.

Dimly I set foot upon the air,

I fled, I flew, through the thrills of light,

With all about, above, below, the whirring

Of almighty wings.

I found a twilight land,

Where, hardly hid, the sun

Sent softly-saddened rays of

Red and brown to burn the iron soil

And bathe the snow-white peaks

In mighty splendor.

Black were the men,

Hard-haired and silent-slow,

Moving as shadows,

Bending with face of fear to earthward;

And women there were none.

"Woman, woman, woman!"

I cried in mounting terror.

"Woman and Child!"

And the cry sang back

Through heaven, with the

Whirring of almighty wings.

Wings, wings, endless wings,--

Heaven and earth are wings;

Wings that flutter, furl, and fold,

Always folding and unfolding,

Ever folding yet again;

Wings, veiling some vast

And veiléd face,

In blazing blackness,

Behind the folding and unfolding,

The rolling and unrolling of

Almighty wings!

I saw the black men huddle,

Fumed in fear, falling face downward;

Vainly I clutched and clawed,

Dumbly they cringed and cowered,

Moaning in mournful monotone:

O Freedom, O Freedom,

O Freedom over me;

Before I'll be a slave,

I'll be buried in my grave,

And go home to my God,

And be free.

It was angel-music

From the dead,

And ever, as they sang,

Some wingéd thing of wings, filling all heaven,

Folding and unfolding, and folding yet again,

Tore out their blood and entrails,

'Til I screamed in utter terror;

And a silence came--

A silence and the wailing of a babe.

Then, at last, I saw and shamed;

I knew how these dumb, dark, and dusky things

Had given blood and life,

To fend the caves of underground,

The great black caves of utter night,

Where earth lay full of mothers

And their babes.

Little children sobbing in darkness,

Little children crying in silent pain,

Little mothers rocking and groping and struggling,

Digging and delving and groveling,

Amid the dying-dead and dead-in-life

And drip and dripping of warm, wet blood,

Far, far beneath the wings,--

The folding and unfolding of almighty wings.

I bent with tears and pitying hands,

Above these dusky star-eyed children,--

Crinkly-haired, with sweet-sad baby voices,

Pleading low for light and love and living--

And I crooned:

"Little children weeping there,

God shall find your faces fair;

Guerdon for your deep distress,

He shall send His tenderness;

For the tripping of your feet

Make a mystic music sweet

In the darkness of your hair;

Light and laughter in the air--

Little children weeping there,

God shall find your faces fair!"

I strode above the stricken, bleeding men,

The rampart 'ranged against the skies,

And shouted:

"Up, I say, build and slay;

Fight face foremost, force a way,

Unloose, unfetter, and unbind;

Be men and free!"

Dumbly they shrank,

Muttering they pointed toward that peak,

Than vastness vaster,

Whereon a darkness brooded,

"Who shall look and live," they sighed;

And I sensed

The folding and unfolding of almighty wings.

Yet did we build of iron, bricks, and blood;

We built a day, a year, a thousand years,

Blood was the mortar,--blood and tears,

And, ah, the Thing, the Thing of wings,

The wingéd, folding Wing of Things

Did furnish much mad mortar

For that tower.

Slow and ever slower rose the towering task,

And with it rose the sun,

Until at last on one wild day,

Wind-whirled, cloud-swept and terrible

I stood beneath the burning shadow

Of the peak,

Beneath the whirring of almighty wings,

While downward from my feet

Streamed the long line of dusky faces

And the wail of little children sobbing under earth.

Alone, aloft,

I saw through firmaments on high

The drama of Almighty God,

With all its flaming suns and stars.

"Freedom!" I cried.

"Freedom!" cried heaven, earth, and stars;

And a Voice near-far,

Amid the folding and unfolding of almighty wings,

Answered, "I am Freedom--

Who sees my face is free--

He and his."

I dared not look;

Downward I glanced on deep-bowed heads and closed eyes,

Outward I gazed on flecked and flaming blue--

But ever onward, upward flew

The sobbing of small voices,--

Down, down, far down into the night.

Slowly I lifted livid limbs aloft;

Upward I strove: the face! the face!

Onward I reeled: the face! the face!

To beauty wonderful as sudden death,

Or horror horrible as endless life--

Up! Up! the blood-built way;

(Shadow grow vaster!

Terror come faster!)

Up! Up! to the blazing blackness

Of one veiléd face.

And endless folding and unfolding,

Rolling and unrolling of almighty wings.

The last step stood!

The last dim cry of pain

Fluttered across the stars,

And then--

Wings, wings, triumphant wings,

Lifting and lowering, waxing and waning,

Swinging and swaying, twirling and whirling,

Whispering and screaming, streaming and gleaming,

Spreading and sweeping and shading and flaming--

Wings, wings, eternal wings,

'Til the hot, red blood,

Flood fleeing flood,

Thundered through heaven and mine ears,

While all across a purple sky,

The last vast pinion.

Trembled to unfold.

I rose upon the Mountain of the Moon,--

I felt the blazing glory of the Sun;

I heard the Song of Children crying, "Free!"

I saw the face of Freedom--

And I died.

VIII

THE IMMORTAL CHILD

If a man die shall he live again? We do not know. But this we do know,

that our children's children live forever and grow and develop toward

perfection as they are trained. All human problems, then, center in the

Immortal Child and his education is the problem of problems. And first

for illustration of what I would say may I not take for example, out of

many millions, the life of one dark child.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is now nineteen years since I first saw Coleridge-Taylor. We were in

London in some somber hall where there were many meeting, men and women

called chiefly to the beautiful World's Fair at Paris; and then a few

slipping over to London to meet Pan-Africa. We were there from Cape

Colony and Liberia, from Haiti and the States, and from the Islands of

the Sea. I remember the stiff, young officer who came with credentials

from Menelik of Abyssinia; I remember the bitter, black American who

whispered how an army of the Soudan might some day cross the Alps; I

remember Englishmen, like the Colensos, who sat and counseled with us;

but above all, I remember Coleridge-Taylor.

He was a little man and nervous, with dark-golden face and hair that

bushed and strayed. His fingers were always nervously seeking hidden

keys and he was quick with enthusiasm,--instinct with life. His bride of

a year or more,--dark, too, in her whiter way,--was of the calm and

quiet type. Her soft contralto voice thrilled us often as she sang,

while her silences were full of understanding.

Several times we met in public gatherings and then they bade me to their

home,--a nest of a cottage, with gate and garden, hidden in London's

endless rings of suburbs. I dimly recall through these years a room in

cozy disorder, strewn with music--music on the floor and music on the

chairs, music in the air as the master rushed to the piano now and

again to make some memory melodious--some allusion real.

And then at last, for it was the last, I saw Coleridge-Taylor in a

mighty throng of people crowding the Crystal Palace. We came in facing

the stage and scarcely dared look around. On the stage were a full

orchestra, a chorus of eight hundred voices, and some of the world's

famous soloists. He left his wife sitting beside me, and she was very

silent as he went forward to lift the conductor's baton. It was one of

the earliest renditions of "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast." We sat at rapt

attention and when the last, weird music died, the great chorus and

orchestra rose as a man to acclaim the master; he turned toward the

audience and then we turning for the first time saw that sea of faces

behind,--the misty thousands whose voices rose to one strong shout of

joy! It was a moment such as one does not often live. It seemed, and

was, prophetic.

This young man who stepped forth as one of the most notable of modern

English composers had a simple and uneventful career. His father was a

black surgeon of Sierra Leone who came to London for study. While there

he met an English girl and this son was born, in London, in 1875.

Then came a series of chances. His father failed to succeed and

disappeared back to Africa leaving the support of the child to the poor

working mother. The child showed evidences of musical talent and a

friendly workingman gave him a little violin. A musician glancing from

his window saw a little dark boy playing marbles on the street with a

tiny violin in one hand; he gave him lessons. He happened to gain

entrance into a charity school with a master of understanding mind who

recognized genius when he saw it; and finally his beautiful child's

treble brought him to the notice of the choirmaster of St. George's,

Croyden.

So by happy accident his way was clear. Within his soul was no

hesitation. He was one of those fortunate beings who are not called to

\_Wander-Jahre\_, but are born with sails set and seas charted. Already

the baby of four little years was a musician, and as choir-boy and

violinist he walked unhesitatingly and surely to his life work. He was

graduated with honors from the Royal Academy of Music in 1894, and

married soon after the daughter of one of his professors. Then his life

began, and whatever it lacked of physical adventure in the conventional

round of a modern world-city, it more than gained in the almost

tempestuous outpouring of his spiritual nature. Life to him was neither

meat nor drink,--it was creative flame; ideas, plans, melodies glowed

within him. To create, to do, to accomplish; to know the white glory of

mighty midnights and the pale Amen of dawns was his day of days. Songs,

pianoforte and violin pieces, trios and quintets for strings, incidental

music, symphony, orchestral, and choral works rushed from his fingers.

Nor were they laboriously contrived or light, thin things made to meet

sudden popularity. Rather they were the flaming bits that must be said

and sung,--that could not wait the slower birth of years, so hurried to

the world as though their young creator knew that God gave him but a

day. His whole active life was scarcely more than a decade and a half,

and yet in that time, without wealth, friends, or influence, in the face

of perhaps the most critical and skeptical and least imaginative

civilization of the modern world, he wrote his name so high as a

creative artist that it cannot soon be forgotten.

And this was but one side of the man. On the other was the

sweet-tempered, sympathetic comrade, always willing to help, never

knowing how to refuse, generous with every nerve and fiber of his being.

Think of a young musician, father of a family, who at the time of his

death held positions as Associate of the Royal College of Music,

Professor in Trinity College and Crystal Palace, Conductor of the Handel

Choral Society and the Rochester Choral Society, Principal of the

Guildhall School of Music, where he had charge of the choral choir, the

orchestra, and the opera. He was repeatedly the leader of music

festivals all over Great Britain and a judge of contests. And with all

this his house was open in cheering hospitality to friends and his hand

ever ready with sympathy and help.

When such a man dies, it must bring pause to a reasoning world. We may

call his death-sickness pneumonia, but we all know that it was sheer

overwork,--the using of a delicately-tuned instrument too commonly and

continuously and carelessly to let it last its normal life. We may well

talk of the waste of wood and water, of food and fire, but the real and

unforgivable waste of modern civilization is the waste of ability and

genius,--the killing of useful, indispensable men who have no right to

die; who deserve, not for themselves, but for the world, leisure,

freedom from distraction, expert medical advice, and intelligent

sympathy.

Coleridge-Taylor's life work was not finished,--it was but well begun.

He lived only his first period of creative genius, when melody and

harmony flashed and fluttered in subtle, compelling, and more than

promising profusion. He did not live to do the organized, constructive

work in the full, calm power of noonday,--the reflective finishing of

evening. In the annals of the future his name must always stand high,

but with the priceless gift of years, who can say where it might not

have stood.

Why should he have worked so breathlessly, almost furiously? It was, we

may be sure, because with unflinching determination and with no thought

of surrender he faced the great alternative,--the choice which the

cynical, thoughtless, busy, modern world spreads grimly before its

greater souls--food or beauty, bread and butter, or ideals. And

continually we see worthier men turning to the pettier, cheaper

thing--the popular portrait, the sensational novel, the jingling song.

The choice is not always between the least and the greatest, the high

and the empty, but only too often it is between starvation and

something. When, therefore, we see a man, working desperately to earn a

living and still stooping to no paltry dickering and to no unworthy

work, handing away a "Hiawatha" for less than a song, pausing for

glimpses of the stars when a world full of charcoal glowed far more

warmly and comfortably, we know that such a man is a hero in a sense

never approached by the swashbuckling soldier or the lying patriot.

Deep as was the primal tragedy in the life of Coleridge-Taylor, there

lay another still deeper. He smiled at it lightly, as we all do,--we who

live within the veil,--to hide the deeper hurt. He had, with us, that

divine and African gift of laughter, that echo of a thousand centuries

of suns. I mind me how once he told of the bishop, the well-groomed

English bishop, who eyed the artist gravely, with his eye-glass--hair

and color and figure,--and said quite audibly to his friends, "Quite

interesting--looks intelligent,--yes--yes!"

Fortunate was Coleridge-Taylor to be born in Europe and to speak a

universal tongue. In America he could hardly have had his career. His

genius was, to be sure, recognized (with some palpitation and

consternation) when it came full-grown across the seas with an English

imprint; but born here, it might never have been permitted to grow. We

know in America how to discourage, choke, and murder ability when it so

far forgets itself as to choose a dark skin. England, thank God, is

slightly more civilized than her colonies; but even there the path of

this young man was no way of roses and just a shade thornier than that

of whiter men. He did not complain at it,--he did not

"Wince and cry aloud."

Rather the hint here and there of color discrimination in England

aroused in him deeper and more poignant sympathy with his people

throughout the world. He was one with that great company of

mixed-blooded men: Pushkin and Dumas, Hamilton and Douglass, Browning

and many others; but he more than most of these men knew the call of the

blood when it came and listened and answered. He came to America with

strange enthusiasm. He took with quite simple and unconscious grace the

conventional congratulations of the musical world. He was used to that.

But to his own people--to the sad sweetness of their voices, their

inborn sense of music, their broken, half-articulate voices,--he leapt

with new enthusiasm. From the fainter shadowings of his own life, he

sensed instinctively the vaster tragedy of theirs. His soul yearned to

give voice and being to this human thing. He early turned to the sorrow

songs. He sat at the faltering feet of Paul Laurence Dunbar and he asked

(as we sadly shook our heads) for some masterpiece of this world-tragedy

that his soul could set to music. And then, so characteristically, he

rushed back to England, composed a half-dozen exquisite harmonies

haunted by slave-songs, led the Welsh in their singing, listened to the

Scotch, ordered great music festivals in all England, wrote for Beerbohm

Tree, took on another music professorship, promised a trip to Germany,

and at last, staggering home one night, on his way to his wife and

little boy and girl, fell in his tracks and in four days was dead, at

the age of thirty-seven. They say that in his death-throe he arose and

facing some great, ghostly choir raised his last baton, while all around

the massive silence rang with the last mist-music of his dying ears.

He was buried from St. Michael's on September 5, 1912, with the acclaim

of kings and music masters and little children and to the majestic

melody of his own music. The tributes that followed him to his grave

were unusually hearty and sincere. The head of the Royal College calls

the first production of "Hiawatha" one of the most remarkable events in

modern English musical history and the trilogy one of the most

universally-beloved works of modern English music. One critic calls

Taylor's a name "which with that of Elgar represented the nation's most

individual output" and calls his "Atonement" "perhaps the finest passion

music of modern times." Another critic speaks of his originality:

"Though surrounded by the influences that are at work in Europe today,

he retained his individuality to the end, developing his style, however,

and evincing new ideas in each succeeding work. His untimely death at

the age of thirty-seven, a short life--like those of Schubert,

Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Hugo Wolf--has robbed the world of one of its

noblest singers, one of those few men of modern times who found

expression in the language of musical song, a lyricist of power and

worth."

But the tributes did not rest with the artist; with peculiar unanimity

they sought his "sterling character," "the good husband and father," the

"staunch and loyal friend." And perhaps I cannot better end these

hesitating words than with that tribute from one who called this master,

friend, and whose lament cried in the night with more of depth and

passion than Alfred Noyes is wont in his self-repression to voice:

"Through him, his race, a moment, lifted up

Forests of hands to beauty, as in prayer,

Touched through his lips the sacramental cup

And then sank back, benumbed in our bleak air."

Yet, consider: to many millions of people this man was all wrong.

\_First\_, he ought never to have been born, for he was the mulatto son of

a white woman. \_Secondly\_, he should never have been educated as a

musician,--he should have been trained, for his "place" in the world and

to make him satisfied therewith. \_Thirdly\_, he should not have married

the woman he loved and who loved him, for she was white and the niece of

an Oxford professor. \_Fourthly\_, the children of such a union--but why

proceed? You know it all by heart.

If he had been black, like Paul Laurence Dunbar, would the argument have

been different? No. He should never have been born, for he is a

"problem." He should never be educated, for he cannot be educated. He

should never marry, for that means children and there is no place for

black children in this world.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the treatment of the child the world foreshadows its own future and

faith. All words and all thinking lead to the child,--to that vast

immortality and the wide sweep of infinite possibility which the child

represents. Such thought as this it was that made the Master say of old

as He saw baby faces:

"And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, it is better for

him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into

the sea."

And yet the mothers and fathers and the men and women of my race must

often pause and ask: Is it worth while? Ought children be born to us?

Have we any right to make human souls face what we face today? The

answer is clear: If the great battle of human right against poverty,

against disease, against color prejudice is to be won, it must be won,

not in our day, but in the day of our children's children. Ours is the

blood and dust of battle; theirs the rewards of victory. If, then, they

are not there because we have not brought them into the world, we have

been the guiltiest factor in conquering ourselves. It is our duty, then,

to accomplish the immortality of black blood, in order that the day may

come in this dark world when poverty shall be abolished, privilege be

based on individual desert, and the color of a man's skin be no bar to

the outlook of his soul.

If it is our duty as honest colored men and women, battling for a great

principle, to bring not aimless rafts of children to the world, but as

many as, with reasonable sacrifice, we can train to largest manhood,

what in its inner essence shall that training be, particularly in its

beginning?

The first temptation is to shield the child,--to hedge it about that it

may not know and will not dream of the color line. Then when we can no

longer wholly shield, to indulge and pamper and coddle, as though in

this dumb way to compensate. From this attitude comes the multitude of

our spoiled, wayward, disappointed children. And must we not blame

ourselves? For while the motive was pure and the outer menace undoubted,

is shielding and indulgence the way to meet it?

Some Negro parents, realizing this, leave their children to sink or swim

in this sea of race prejudice. They neither shield nor explain, but

thrust them forth grimly into school or street and let them learn as

they may from brutal fact. Out of this may come strength, poise,

self-dependence, and out of it, too, may come bewilderment, cringing

deception, and self-distrust. It is, all said, a brutal, unfair method,

and in its way it is as bad as shielding and indulgence. Why not,

rather, face the facts and tell the truth? Your child is wiser than you

think.

The truth lies ever between extremes. It is wrong to introduce the child

to race consciousness prematurely; it is dangerous to let that

consciousness grow spontaneously without intelligent guidance. With

every step of dawning intelligence, explanation--frank, free, guiding

explanation--must come. The day will dawn when mother must explain

gently but clearly why the little girls next door do not want to play

with "niggers"; what the real cause is of the teacher's unsympathetic

attitude; and how people may ride in the backs of street cars and the

smoker end of trains and still be people, honest high-minded souls.

Remember, too, that in such frank explanation you are speaking in nine

cases out of ten to a good deal clearer understanding than you think and

that the child-mind has what your tired soul may have lost faith

in,--the Power and the Glory.

Out of little, unspoiled souls rise up wonderful resources and healing

balm. Once the colored child understands the white world's attitude and

the shameful wrong of it, you have furnished it with a great life

motive,--a power and impulse toward good which is the mightiest thing

man has. How many white folk would give their own souls if they might

graft into their children's souls a great, moving, guiding ideal!

With this Power there comes, in the transfiguring soul of childhood, the

Glory: the vision of accomplishment, the lofty ideal. Once let the

strength of the motive work, and it becomes the life task of the parent

to guide and to shape the ideal; to raise it from resentment and revenge

to dignity and self-respect, to breadth and accomplishment, to human

service; to beat back every thought of cringing and surrender.

Here, at last, we can speak with no hesitation, with no lack of faith.

For we know that as the world grows better there will be realized in our

children's lives that for which we fight unfalteringly, but vainly now.

So much for the problem of the home and our own dark children. Now let

us look beyond the pale upon the children of the wide world. What is the

real lesson of the life of Coleridge-Taylor? It is this: humanly

speaking it was sheer accident that this boy developed his genius. We

have a right to assume that hundreds and thousands of boys and girls

today are missing the chance of developing unusual talents because the

chances have been against them; and that indeed the majority of the

children of the world are not being systematically fitted for their life

work and for life itself. Why?

Many seek the reason in the content of the school program. They

feverishly argue the relative values of Greek, mathematics, and manual

training, but fail with singular unanimity in pointing out the

fundamental cause of our failure in human education: That failure is due

to the fact that we aim not at the full development of the child, but

that the world regards and always has regarded education first as a

means of buttressing the established order of things rather than

improving it. And this is the real reason why strife, war, and

revolution have marked the onward march of humanity instead of reason

and sound reform. Instead of seeking to push the coming generation ahead

of our pitiful accomplishment, we insist that it march behind. We say,

morally, that high character is conformity to present public opinion; we

say industrially that the present order is best and that children must

be trained to perpetuate it.

But, it is objected, what else can we do? Can we teach Revolution to the

inexperienced in hope that they may discern progress? No, but we may

teach frankly that this world is not perfection, but development: that

the object of education is manhood and womanhood, clear reason,

individual talent and genius and the spirit of service and sacrifice,

and not simply a frantic effort to avoid change in present institutions;

that industry is for man and not man for industry and that while we must

have workers to work, the prime object of our training is not the work

but the worker--not the maintenance of present industrial caste but the

development of human intelligence by which drudgery may be lessened and

beauty widened.

Back of our present educational system is the philosophy that sneers at

the foolish Fathers who believed it self-evident, "that all men were

created free and equal." Surely the overwhelming evidence is today that

men are slaves and unequal. But is it not education that is the creator

of this freedom and equality? Most men today cannot conceive of a

freedom that does not involve somebody's slavery. They do not want

equality because the thrill of their happiness comes from having things

that others have not. But may not human education fix the fine ideal of

an equal maximum of freedom for every human soul combined with that

minimum of slavery for each soul which the inexorable physical facts of

the world impose--rather than complete freedom for some and complete

slavery for others; and, again, is not the equality toward which the

world moves an equality of honor in the assigned human task itself

rather than equal facility in doing different tasks? Human equality is

not lack of difference, nor do the infinite human differences argue

relative superiority and inferiority. And, again, how new an aspect

human differences may assume when all men are educated. Today we think

of apes, semi-apes, and human beings; tomorrow we may think of Keir

Hardies, Roosevelts, and Beethovens--not equals but men. Today we are

forcing men into educational slavery in order that others may enjoy

life, and excuse ourselves by saying that the world's work must be done.

We are degrading some sorts of work by honoring others, and then

expressing surprise that most people object to having their children

trained solely to take up their father's tasks.

Given as the ideal the utmost possible freedom for every human soul,

with slavery for none, and equal honor for all necessary human tasks,

then our problem of education is greatly simplified: we aim to develop

human souls; to make all intelligent; to discover special talents and

genius. With this course of training beginning in early childhood and

never ceasing must go the technical training for the present world's

work according to carefully studied individual gifts and wishes.

On the other hand, if we arrange our system of education to develop

workmen who will not strike and Negroes satisfied with their present

place in the world, we have set ourselves a baffling task. We find

ourselves compelled to keep the masses ignorant and to curb our own

thought and expression so as not to inflame the ignorant. We force

moderate reformers and men with new and valuable ideas to become red

radicals and revolutionists, since that happens to be the only way to

make the world listen to reason. Consider our race problem in the South:

the South has invested in Negro ignorance; some Northerners proposed

limited education, not, they explained, to better the Negro, but merely

to make the investment more profitable to the present beneficiaries.

They thus gained wide Southern support for schools like Hampton and

Tuskegee. But could this program be expected long to satisfy colored

folk? And was this shifty dodging of the real issue the wisest

statesmanship? No! The real question in the South is the question of the

permanency of present color caste. The problem, then, of the formal

training of our colored children has been strangely complicated by the

strong feeling of certain persons as to their future in America and the

world. And the reaction toward this caste education has strengthened the

idea of caste education throughout the world.

Let us then return to fundamental ideals. Children must be trained in a

knowledge of what the world is and what it knows and how it does its

daily work. These things cannot be separated: we cannot teach pure

knowledge apart from actual facts, or separate truth from the human

mind. Above all we must not forget that the object of all education is

the child itself and not what it does or makes.

It is here that a great movement in America has grievously sinned

against the light. There has arisen among us a movement to make the

Public School primarily the hand-maiden of production. America is

conceived of as existing for the sake of its mines, fields and

factories, and not those factories, fields and mines as existing for

America. Consequently, the public schools are for training the mass of

men as servants and laborers and mechanics to increase the land's

industrial efficiency.

Those who oppose this program, especially if they are black, are accused

of despising common toil and humble service. In fact, we Negroes are but

facing in our own children a world problem: how can we, while

maintaining a proper output of goods and furnishing needed services,

increase the knowledge of experience of common men and conserve genius

for the common weal? Without wider, deeper intelligence among the masses

Democracy cannot accomplish its greater ends. Without a more careful

conservation of human ability and talent the world cannot secure the

services which its greater needs call for. Yet today who goes to

college, the Talented or the Rich? Who goes to high school, the Bright

or the Well-to-Do? Who does the physical work of the world, those whose

muscles need the exercise or those whose souls and minds are stupefied

with manual toil? How is the drudgery of the world distributed, by

thoughtful justice or the lash of Slavery?

We cannot base the education of future citizens on the present

inexcusable inequality of wealth nor on physical differences of race. We

must seek not to make men carpenters but to make carpenters men.

Colored Americans must then with deep determination educate their

children in the broadest, highest way. They must fill the colleges with

the talented and fill the fields and shops with the intelligent. Wisdom

is the principal thing. Therefore, get wisdom.

But why am I talking simply of "colored" children? Is not the problem of

their education simply an intensification of the problem of educating

all children? Look at our plight in the United States, nearly 150 years

after the establishment of a government based on human intelligence.

If we take the figures of the Thirteenth Census, we find that there were

five and one-half million illiterate Americans of whom 3,184,633 were

white. Remembering that illiteracy is a crude and extreme test of

ignorance, we may assume that there are in the United States ten million

people over ten years of age who are too ignorant either to perform

their civic duties or to teach industrial efficiency. Moreover, it does

not seem that this illiteracy is disappearing rapidly.

For instance, nine percent of American children between ten and

nineteen years of age cannot read and write. Moreover, there are

millions of children who, judging by the figures for the school year

1909-10, are not going to learn to read and write, for of the Americans

six to fourteen years of age there were 3,125,392 who were not in school

a single day during that year. If we take the eleven million youths

fifteen to twenty years of age for whom vocational training is

particularly adapted, we find that nearly five per cent of these, or

448,414, are absolutely illiterate; it is not too much to assume that a

million of them have not acquired enough of the ordinary tools of

intelligence to make the most of efficient vocational training.

Confining ourselves to the white people, over fifteen per cent of the

white children six to fourteen years of age, or 2,253,198, did not

attend school during the school year 1909-10. Of the native white

children of native parents ten to fourteen years of age nearly a tenth

were not in school during that year; 121,878 native white children of

native parents, fifteen to nineteen years of age, were illiterate.

If we continue our attention to the colored children, the case is, of

course, much worse.

We cannot hope to make intelligent workmen and intelligent citizens of a

group of people, over forty per cent of whose children six to fourteen

years of age were not in school a single day during 1909-10; for the

other sixty per cent the school term in the majority of cases was

probably less than five months. Of the Negro children ten to fourteen

years of age 18.9 per cent were illiterate; of those fifteen to nineteen

years of age 20.3 per cent were illiterate; of those ten to fourteen

years of age 31.4 per cent did not go to school a single day in 1909-10.

What is the trouble? It is simple. We are spending one dollar for

education where we should spend ten dollars. If tomorrow we multiplied

our effort to educate the next generation ten-fold, we should but begin

our bounden duty. The heaven that lies about our infancy is but the

ideals come true which every generation of children is capable of

bringing; but we, selfish in our own ignorance and incapacity, are

making of education a series of miserable compromises: How ignorant can

we let a child grow to be in order to make him the best cotton mill

operative? What is the least sum that will keep the average youth out of

jail? How many months saved on a high school course will make the

largest export of wheat?

If we realized that children are the future, that immortality is the

present child, that no education which educates can possibly be too

costly, then we know that the menace of Kaiserism which called for the

expenditure of more than 332 thousand millions of dollars was not a whit

more pressing than the menace of ignorance, and that no nation tomorrow

will call itself civilized which does not give every single human being

college and vocational training free and under the best teaching force

procurable for love or money.

This world has never taken the education of children seriously. Misled

by selfish dreamings of personal life forever, we have neglected the

true and practical immortality through the endless life of children's

children. Seeking counsels of our own souls' perfection, we have

despised and rejected the possible increasing perfection of unending

generations. Or if we are thrown back in pessimistic despair from making

living folk decent, we leap to idle speculations of a thousand years

hereafter instead of working steadily and persistently for the next

generation.

All our problems center in the child. All our hopes, our dreams are for

our children. Has our own life failed? Let its lesson save the

children's lives from similar failure. Is democracy a failure? Train up

citizens that will make it succeed. Is wealth too crude, too foolish in

form, and too easily stolen? Train up workers with honor and consciences

and brains. Have we degraded service with menials? Abolish the mean

spirit and implant sacrifice. Do we despise women? Train them as workers

and thinkers and not as playthings, lest future generations ape our

worst mistake. Do we despise darker races? Teach the children its fatal

cost in spiritual degradation and murder, teach them that to hate

"niggers" or "chinks" is to crucify souls like their own. Is there

anything we would accomplish with human beings? Do it with the immortal

child, with a stretch of endless time for doing it and with infinite

possibilities to work on.

Is this our attitude toward education? It is not--neither in England nor

America--in France nor Germany--with black nor white nor yellow folk.

Education to the modern world is a burden which we are driven to carry.

We shirk and complain. We do just as little as possible and only threat

or catastrophe induces us to do more than a minimum. If the ignorant

mass, panting to know, revolts, we dole them gingerly enough knowledge

to pacify them temporarily. If, as in the Great War, we discover

soldiers too ignorant to use our machines of murder and destruction, we

train them--to use machines of murder and destruction. If mounting

wealth calls for intelligent workmen, we rush tumultuously to train

workers--in order to increase our wealth. But of great, broad plans to

train all men for all things--to make a universe intelligent, busy,

good, creative and beautiful--where in this wide world is such an

educational program? To announce it is to invite gasps or Brobdingnagian

laughter. It cannot be done. It will cost too much.

What has been done with man can be done with men, if the world tries

long enough and hard enough. And as to the cost--all the wealth of the

world, save that necessary for sheer decent existence and for the

maintenance of past civilization, is, and of right ought to be, the

property of the children for their education.

I mean it. In one year, 1917, we spent $96,700,000,000 for war. We blew

it away to murder, maim, and destroy! Why? Because the blind, brutal

crime of powerful and selfish interests made this path through hell the

only visible way to heaven. We did it. We had to do it, and we are glad

the putrid horror is over. But, now, are we prepared to spend less to

make a world in which the resurgence of such devilish power will be

impossible?

Do we really want war to cease?

Then educate the children of this generation at a cost no whit less and

if necessary a hundred times as great as the cost of the Great War.

Last year, 1917, education cost us $915,000,000.

Next year it ought to cost us at least two thousand million dollars. We

should spend enough money to hire the best teaching force possible--the

best organizing and directing ability in the land, even if we have to

strip the railroads and meat trust. We should dot city and country with

the most efficient, sanitary, and beautiful school-houses the world

knows and we should give every American child common school, high

school, and college training and then vocational guidance in earning a

living.

Is this a dream?

Can we afford less?

Consider our so-called educational "problems"; "How may we keep pupils

in the high school?" Feed and clothe them. "Shall we teach Latin, Greek,

and mathematics to the 'masses'?" If they are worth teaching to anybody,

the masses need them most. "Who shall go to college?" Everybody. "When

shall culture training give place to technical education for work?"

Never.

These questions are not "problems." They are simply "excuses" for

spending less time and money on the next generation. Given ten millions

of dollars a year, what can we best do with the education of a million

children? The real answer is--kill nine hundred and ninety thousand of

them quickly and not gradually, and make thoroughly-trained men and

women of the other ten thousand. But who set the limit of ten million

dollars? Who says it shall not be ten thousand millions, as it ought to

be? You and I say it, and in saying it we sin against the Holy Ghost.

We sin because in our befuddled brains we have linked money and

education inextricably. We assume that only the wealthy have a real

right to education when, in fact, being born is being given a right to

college training. Our wealth today is, we all know, distributed mainly

by chance inheritance and personal favor and yet we attempt to base the

right to education on this foundation. The result is grotesque! We bury

genius; we send it to jail; we ridicule and mock it, while we send

mediocrity and idiocy to college, gilded and crowned. For three hundred

years we have denied black Americans an education and now we exploit

them before a gaping world: See how ignorant and degraded they are! All

they are fit for is education for cotton-picking and dish-washing. When

Dunbar and Taylor happen along, we are torn between something like

shamefaced anger or impatient amazement.

A world guilty of this last and mightiest war has no right to enjoy or

create until it has made the future safe from another Arkansas or

Rheims. To this there is but one patent way, proved and inescapable,

Education, and that not for me or for you but for the Immortal Child.

And that child is of all races and all colors. All children are the

children of all and not of individuals and families and races. The whole

generation must be trained and guided and out of it as out of a huge

reservoir must be lifted all genius, talent, and intelligence to serve

all the world.

Almighty Death[1]

Softly, quite softly--

For I hear, above the murmur of the sea,

Faint and far-fallen footsteps, as of One

Who comes from out beyond the endless ends of Time,

With voice that downward looms thro' singing stars;

Its subtle sound I see thro' these long-darkened eyes,

I hear the Light He bringeth on His hands--

Almighty Death!

Softly, oh, softly, lest He pass me by,

And that unquivering Light toward which my longing soul

And tortured body through these years have writhed,

Fade to the dun darkness of my days.

Softly, full softly, let me rise and greet

The strong, low luting of that long-awaited call;

Swiftly be all my good and going gone,

And this vast veiled and vanquished vigor of my soul

Seek somehow otherwhere its rest and goal,

Where endless spaces stretch,

Where endless time doth moan,

Where endless light doth pour

Thro' the black kingdoms of eternal death.

Then haply I may see what things I have not seen,

Then I may know what things I have not known;

Then may I do my dreams.

Farewell! No sound of idle mourning let there be

To shudder this full silence--save the voice

Of children--little children, white and black,

Whispering the deeds I tried to do for them;

While I at last unguided and alone

Pass softly, full softly.

[Footnote 1: For Joseph Pulitzer, October 29, 1911.]

IX

OF BEAUTY AND DEATH

For long years we of the world gone wild have looked into the face of

death and smiled. Through all our bitter tears we knew how beautiful it

was to die for that which our souls called sufficient. Like all true

beauty this thing of dying was so simple, so matter-of-fact. The boy

clothed in his splendid youth stood before us and laughed in his own

jolly way,--went and was gone. Suddenly the world was full of the

fragrance of sacrifice. We left our digging and burden-bearing; we

turned from our scraping and twisting of things and words; we paused

from our hurrying hither and thither and walking up and down, and asked

in half-whisper: this Death--is this Life? And is its beauty real or

false? And of this heart-questioning I am writing.

\* \* \* \* \*

My friend, who is pale and positive, said to me yesterday, as the tired

sun was nodding:

"You are too sensitive."

I admit, I am--sensitive. I am artificial. I cringe or am bumptious or

immobile. I am intellectually dishonest, art-blind, and I lack humor.

"Why don't you stop all this?" she retorts triumphantly.

You will not let us.

"There you go, again. You know that I--"

Wait! I answer. Wait!

I arise at seven. The milkman has neglected me. He pays little attention

to colored districts. My white neighbor glares elaborately. I walk

softly, lest I disturb him. The children jeer as I pass to work. The

women in the street car withdraw their skirts or prefer to stand. The

policeman is truculent. The elevator man hates to serve Negroes. My job

is insecure because the white union wants it and does not want me. I try

to lunch, but no place near will serve me. I go forty blocks to

Marshall's, but the Committee of Fourteen closes Marshall's; they say

white women frequent it.

"Do all eating places discriminate?"

No, but how shall I know which do not--except--

I hurry home through crowds. They mutter or get angry. I go to a

mass-meeting. They stare. I go to a church. "We don't admit niggers!"

Or perhaps I leave the beaten track. I seek new work. "Our employees

would not work with you; our customers would object."

I ask to help in social uplift.

"Why--er--we will write you."

I enter the free field of science. Every laboratory door is closed and

no endowments are available.

I seek the universal mistress, Art; the studio door is locked.

I write literature. "We cannot publish stories of colored folks of that

type." It's the only type I know.

This is my life. It makes me idiotic. It gives me artificial problems. I

hesitate, I rush, I waver. In fine,--I am sensitive!

My pale friend looks at me with disbelief and curling tongue.

"Do you mean to sit there and tell me that this is what happens to you

each day?"

Certainly not, I answer low.

"Then you only fear it will happen?"

I fear!

"Well, haven't you the courage to rise above a--almost a craven fear?"

Quite--quite craven is my fear, I admit; but the terrible thing

is--these things do happen!

"But you just said--"

They do happen. Not all each day,--surely not. But now and then--now

seldom, now, sudden; now after a week, now in a chain of awful minutes;

not everywhere, but anywhere--in Boston, in Atlanta. That's the hell of

it. Imagine spending your life looking for insults or for hiding places

from them--shrinking (instinctively and despite desperate bolsterings of

courage) from blows that are not always but ever; not each day, but each

week, each month, each year. Just, perhaps, as you have choked back the

craven fear and cried, "I am and will be the master of my--"

"No more tickets downstairs; here's one to the smoking gallery."

You hesitate. You beat back your suspicions. After all, a cigarette with

Charlie Chaplin--then a white man pushes by--

"Three in the orchestra."

"Yes, sir." And in he goes.

Suddenly your heart chills. You turn yourself away toward the golden

twinkle of the purple night and hesitate again. What's the use? Why not

always yield--always take what's offered,--always bow to force, whether

of cannon or dislike? Then the great fear surges in your soul, the real

fear--the fear beside which other fears are vain imaginings; the fear

lest right there and then you are losing your own soul; that you are

losing your own soul and the soul of a people; that millions of unborn

children, black and gold and mauve, are being there and then despoiled

by you because you are a coward and dare not fight!

Suddenly that silly orchestra seat and the cavorting of a comedian with

funny feet become matters of life, death, and immortality; you grasp the

pillars of the universe and strain as you sway back to that befrilled

ticket girl. You grip your soul for riot and murder. You choke and

sputter, and she seeing that you are about to make a "fuss" obeys her

orders and throws the tickets at you in contempt. Then you slink to your

seat and crouch in the darkness before the film, with every tissue

burning! The miserable wave of reaction engulfs you. To think of

compelling puppies to take your hard-earned money; fattening hogs to

hate you and yours; forcing your way among cheap and tawdry idiots--God!

What a night of pleasure!

\* \* \* \* \*

Here, then, is beauty and ugliness, a wide vision of world-sacrifice, a

fierce gleam of world-hate. Which is life and what is death and how

shall we face so tantalizing a contradiction? Any explanation must

necessarily be subtle and involved. No pert and easy word of

encouragement, no merely dark despair, can lay hold of the roots of

these things. And first and before all, we cannot forget that this world

is beautiful. Grant all its ugliness and sin--the petty, horrible snarl

of its putrid threads, which few have seen more near or more often than

I--notwithstanding all this, the beauty of this world is not to be

denied.

Casting my eyes about I dare not let them rest on the beauty of Love and

Friend, for even if my tongue were cunning enough to sing this, the

revelation of reality here is too sacred and the fancy too untrue. Of

one world-beauty alone may we at once be brutally frank and that is the

glory of physical nature; this, though the last of beauties, is divine!

And so, too, there are depths of human degradation which it is not fair

for us to probe. With all their horrible prevalence, we cannot call them

natural. But may we not compare the least of the world's beauty with the

least of its ugliness--not murder, starvation, and rapine, with love and

friendship and creation--but the glory of sea and sky and city, with the

little hatefulnesses and thoughtfulnesses of race prejudice, that out

of such juxtaposition we may, perhaps, deduce some rule of beauty and

life--or death?

\* \* \* \* \*

There mountains hurl themselves against the stars and at their feet lie

black and leaden seas. Above float clouds--white, gray, and inken, while

the clear, impalpable air springs and sparkles like new wine. Last night

we floated on the calm bosom of the sea in the southernmost haven of

Mount Desert. The water flamed and sparkled. The sun had gone, but above

the crooked back of cumulus clouds, dark and pink with radiance, and on

the other sky aloft to the eastward piled the gorgeous-curtained mists

of evening. The radiance faded and a shadowy velvet veiled the

mountains, a humid depth of gloom behind which lurked all the mysteries

of life and death, while above, the clouds hung ashen and dull; lights

twinkled and flashed along the shore, boats glided in the twilight, and

the little puffing of motors droned away. Then was the hour to talk of

life and the meaning of life, while above gleamed silently, suddenly,

star on star.

Bar Harbor lies beneath a mighty mountain, a great, bare, black mountain

that sleeps above the town; but as you leave, it rises suddenly,

threateningly, until far away on Frenchman's Bay it looms above the town

in withering vastness, as if to call all that little world petty save

itself. Beneath the cool, wide stare of that great mountain, men cannot

live as giddily as in some lesser summer's playground. Before the

unveiled face of nature, as it lies naked on the Maine coast, rises a

certain human awe.

God molded his world largely and mightily off this marvelous coast and

meant that in the tired days of life men should come and worship here

and renew their spirit. This I have done and turning I go to work again.

As we go, ever the mountains of Mount Desert rise and greet us on our

going--somber, rock-ribbed and silent, looking unmoved on the moving

world, yet conscious of their everlasting strength.

About us beats the sea--the sail-flecked, restless sea, humming its tune

about our flying keel, unmindful of the voices of men. The land sinks to

meadows, black pine forests, with here and there a blue and wistful

mountain. Then there are islands--bold rocks above the sea, curled

meadows; through and about them roll ships, weather-beaten and patched

of sail, strong-hulled and smoking, light gray and shining. All the

colors of the sea lie about us--gray and yellowing greens and doubtful

blues, blacks not quite black, tinted silvers and golds and dreaming

whites. Long tongues of dark and golden land lick far out into the

tossing waters, and the white gulls sail and scream above them. It is a

mighty coast--ground out and pounded, scarred, crushed, and carven in

massive, frightful lineaments. Everywhere stand the pines--the little

dark and steadfast pines that smile not, neither weep, but wait and

wait. Near us lie isles of flesh and blood, white cottages, tiled and

meadowed. Afar lie shadow-lands, high mist-hidden hills, mountains

boldly limned, yet shading to the sky, faint and unreal.

We skirt the pine-clad shores, chary of men, and know how bitterly

winter kisses these lonely shores to fill yon row of beaked ice houses

that creep up the hills. We are sailing due westward and the sun, yet

two hours high, is blazoning a fiery glory on the sea that spreads and

gleams like some broad, jeweled trail, to where the blue and distant

shadow-land lifts its carven front aloft, leaving, as it gropes, shades

of shadows beyond.

\* \* \* \* \*

Why do not those who are scarred in the world's battle and hurt by its

hardness travel to these places of beauty and drown themselves in the

utter joy of life? I asked this once sitting in a Southern home. Outside

the spring of a Georgia February was luring gold to the bushes and

languor to the soft air. Around me sat color in human flesh--brown that

crimsoned readily; dim soft-yellow that escaped description; cream-like

duskiness that shadowed to rich tints of autumn leaves. And yet a

suggested journey in the world brought no response.

"I should think you would like to travel," said the white one.

But no, the thought of a journey seemed to depress them.

Did you ever see a "Jim-Crow" waiting-room? There are always exceptions,

as at Greensboro--but usually there is no heat in winter and no air in

summer; with undisturbed loafers and train hands and broken,

disreputable settees; to buy a ticket is torture; you stand and stand

and wait and wait until every white person at the "other window" is

waited on. Then the tired agent yells across, because all the tickets

and money are over there--

"What d'ye want? What? Where?"

The agent browbeats and contradicts you, hurries and confuses the

ignorant, gives many persons the wrong change, compels some to purchase

their tickets on the train at a higher price, and sends you and me out

on the platform, burning with indignation and hatred!

The "Jim-Crow" car is up next the baggage car and engine. It stops out

beyond the covering in the rain or sun or dust. Usually there is no step

to help you climb on and often the car is a smoker cut in two and you

must pass through the white smokers or else they pass through your part,

with swagger and noise and stares. Your compartment is a half or a

quarter or an eighth of the oldest car in service on the road. Unless it

happens to be a thorough express, the plush is caked with dirt, the

floor is grimy, and the windows dirty. An impertinent white newsboy

occupies two seats at the end of the car and importunes you to the point

of rage to buy cheap candy, Coco-Cola, and worthless, if not vulgar,

books. He yells and swaggers, while a continued stream of white men

saunters back and forth from the smoker to buy and hear. The white train

crew from the baggage car uses the "Jim-Crow" to lounge in and perform

their toilet. The conductor appropriates two seats for himself and his

papers and yells gruffly for your tickets before the train has scarcely

started. It is best not to ask him for information even in the gentlest

tones. His information is for white persons chiefly. It is difficult to

get lunch or clean water. Lunch rooms either don't serve niggers or

serve them at some dirty and ill-attended hole in the wall. As for

toilet rooms,--don't! If you have to change cars, be wary of junctions

which are usually without accommodation and filled with quarrelsome

white persons who hate a "darky dressed up." You are apt to have the

company of a sheriff and a couple of meek or sullen black prisoners on

part of your way and dirty colored section hands will pour in toward

night and drive you to the smallest corner.

"No," said the little lady in the corner (she looked like an ivory cameo

and her dress flowed on her like a caress), "we don't travel much."

\* \* \* \* \*

Pessimism is cowardice. The man who cannot frankly acknowledge the

"Jim-Crow" car as a fact and yet live and hope is simply afraid either

of himself or of the world. There is not in the world a more disgraceful

denial of human brotherhood than the "Jim-Crow" car of the southern

United States; but, too, just as true, there is nothing more beautiful

in the universe than sunset and moonlight on Montego Bay in far Jamaica.

And both things are true and both belong to this our world, and neither

can be denied.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sun, prepared to cross that awful border which men call Night and

Death, marshals his hosts. I seem to see the spears of mighty horsemen

flash golden in the light; empurpled banners flame afar, and the low

thunder of marching hosts thrills with the thunder of the sea. Athwart

his own path, screening a face of fire, he throws cloud masses, masking

his trained guns. And then the miracle is done. The host passes with

roar too vast for human ear and the sun is set, leaving the frightened

moon and blinded stars.

In the dusk the green-gold palms turn their star-like faces and stretch

their fan-like fingers, lifting themselves proudly, lest any lordly leaf

should know the taint of earth.

Out from the isle the serpent hill thrusts its great length around the

bay, shouldering back the waters and the shadows. Ghost rains sweep

down, smearing his rugged sides, yet on he writhes, undulant with pine

and palm, gleaming until his low, sharp head and lambent tongue, grown

gray and pale and silver in the dying day, kisses the molten gold of the

golden sea.

Then comes the moon. Like fireflies nesting in the hand of God gleams

the city, dim-swathed by fairy palms. A long, thin thumb, mist-mighty,

points shadowy to the Spanish Main, while through the fingers foam the

Seven Seas. Above the calm and gold-green moon, beneath the wind-wet

earth; and here, alone, my soul enchained, enchanted!

\* \* \* \* \*

From such heights of holiness men turn to master the world. All the

pettiness of life drops away and it becomes a great battle before the

Lord. His trumpet,--where does it sound and whither? I go. I saw Montego

Bay at the beginning of the World War. The cry for service as high as

heaven, as wide as human feeling, seemed filling the earth. What were

petty slights, silly insults, paltry problems, beside this call to do

and dare and die? We black folk offered our services to fight. What

happened? Most Americans have forgotten the extraordinary series of

events which worked the feelings of black America to fever heat.

First was the refusal to accept Negro volunteers for the army, except in

the four black regiments already established. While the nation was

combing the country for volunteers for the regular army, it would not

let the American Negro furnish even his proportionate quota of regular

soldiers. This led to some grim bantering among Negroes:

"Why do you want to volunteer?" asked many. "Why should you fight for

this country?"

Before we had chance to reply to this, there came the army draft bill

and the proposal by Vardaman and his ilk to except Negroes. We protested

to Washington in various ways, and while we were insisting that colored

men should be drafted just as other citizens, the bill went through with

two little "jokers."

First, it provided that Negroes should be drafted, but trained in

"separate" units; and, secondly, it somewhat ambiguously permitted men

to be drafted for "labor."

A wave of fear and unrest spread among Negroes and while we were looking

at both these provisions askance, suddenly we received the draft

registration blank. It directed persons "of African descent" to "tear

off the corner!" Probably never before in the history of the United

States has a portion of the citizens been so openly and crassly

discriminated against by action of the general government. It was

disheartening, and on top of it came the celebrated "German plots." It

was alleged in various parts of the country with singular unanimity that

Germans were working among the Negroes, and it was further intimated

that this would make the Negroes too dangerous an element to trust with

guns. To us, of course, it looked as though the discovery and the

proposition came from the same thinly-veiled sources.

Considering carefully this series of happenings the American Negro

sensed an approaching crisis and faced a puzzling dilemma. Here was

evidently preparing fertile ground for the spread of disloyalty and

resentment among the black masses, as they were forced to choose

apparently between forced labor or a "Jim-Crow" draft. Manifestly when a

minority group is thus segregated and forced out of the nation, they can

in reason do but one thing--take advantage of the disadvantage. In this

case we demanded colored officers for the colored troops.

General Wood was early approached and asked to admit suitable candidates

to Plattsburg. He refused. We thereupon pressed the government for a

"separate" camp for the training of Negro officers. Not only did the War

Department hesitate at this request, but strong opposition arose among

colored people themselves. They said we were going too far. "We will

obey the law, but to ask for voluntary segregation is to insult

ourselves." But strong, sober second thought came to our rescue. We said

to our protesting brothers: "We face a condition, not a theory. There is

not the slightest chance of our being admitted to white camps;

therefore, it is either a case of a 'Jim-Crow' officers' training camp

or no colored officers. Of the two things no colored officers would be

the greater calamity."

Thus we gradually made up our minds. But the War Department still

hesitated. It was besieged, and when it presented its final argument,

"We have no place for such a camp," the trustees of Howard University

said: "Take our campus." Eventually twelve hundred colored cadets were

assembled at Fort Des Moines for officers' training.

The city of Des Moines promptly protested, but it finally changed its

mind. Des Moines never before had seen such a class of colored men. They

rapidly became popular with all classes and many encomiums were passed

upon their conduct. Their commanding colonel pronounced their work first

class and declared that they presented excellent material for officers.

Meantime, with one accord, the thought of the colored people turned

toward Colonel Young, their highest officer in the regular army. Charles

Young is a heroic figure. He is the typical soldier,--silent,

uncomplaining, brave, and efficient! From his days at West Point

throughout his thirty years of service he has taken whatever task was

assigned him and performed it efficiently; and there is no doubt but

that the army has been almost merciless in the requirements which it has

put upon this splendid officer. He came through all with flying colors.

In Haiti, in Liberia, in western camps, in the Sequoia Forests of

California, and finally with Pershing in Mexico,--in every case he

triumphed. Just at the time we were looking to the United States

government to call him to head the colored officers' training at Des

Moines, he was retired from the army, because of "high blood pressure!"

There is no disputing army surgeons and their judgment in this case may

be justified, but coming at the time it did, nearly every Negro in the

United States believed that the "high blood pressure" that retired

Colonel Young was in the prejudiced heads of the Southern oligarchy who

were determined that no American Negro should ever wear the stars of a

General.

To say that Negroes of the United States were disheartened at the

retirement of Colonel Young is to put it mildly,--but there was more

trouble. The provision that Negroes must be trained separately looked

simple and was simple in places where there were large Negro

contingents, but in the North with solitary Negroes drafted here and

there we had some extraordinary developments. Regiments appeared with

one Negro where the Negro had to be separated like a pest and put into a

house or even a village by himself while the commander frantically

telegraphed to Washington. Small wonder that one poor fellow in Ohio

solved the problem by cutting his throat. The whole process of drafting

Negroes had to be held up until the government could find methods and

places for assembling them.

Then came Houston. In a moment the nation forgot the whole record of one

of the most celebrated regiments in the United States Army and its

splendid service in the Indian Wars and in the Philippines. It was the

first regiment mobilized in the Spanish-American War and it was the

regiment that volunteered to a man to clean up the yellow fever camps

when others hesitated. It was one of the regiments to which Pershing

said in December:

"Men, I am authorized by Congress to tell you all that our people back

in the States are mightily glad and proud at the way the soldiers have

conducted themselves while in Mexico, and I, General Pershing, can say

with pride that a finer body of men never stood under the flag of our

nation than we find here tonight."

The nation, also, forgot the deep resentment mixed with the pale ghost

of fear which Negro soldiers call up in the breasts of the white South.

It is not so much that they fear that the Negro will strike if he gets a

chance, but rather that they assume with curious unanimity that he has

\_reason\_ to strike, that any other persons in his circumstances or

treated as he is would rebel. Instead of seeking to relieve the cause of

such a possible feeling, most of them strain every effort to bottle up

the black man's resentment. Is it inconceivable that now and then it

bursts all bounds, as at Brownsville and Houston?

So in the midst of this mental turmoil came Houston and East St. Louis.

At Houston black soldiers, goaded and insulted, suddenly went wild and

"shot up" the town. At East St. Louis white strikers on war work killed

and mobbed Negro workingmen, and as a result 19 colored soldiers were

hanged and 51 imprisoned for life for killing 17 whites at Houston,

while for killing 125 Negroes in East St. Louis, 20 white men were

imprisoned, none for more than 15 years, and 10 colored men with them.

\* \* \* \* \*

Once upon a time I took a great journey in this land to three of the

ends of our world and over seven thousand mighty miles. I saw the grim

desert and the high ramparts of the Rocky Mountains. Three days I flew

from the silver beauty of Seattle to the somber whirl of Kansas City.

Three days I flew from the brute might of Chicago to the air of the

Angels in California, scented with golden flowers, where the homes of

men crouch low and loving on the good, broad earth, as though they were

kissing her blossoms. Three days I flew through the empire of Texas, but

all these shall be tales untold, for in all this journey I saw but one

thing that lived and will live eternal in my soul,--the Grand Cañon.

It is a sudden void in the bosom of the earth, down to its entrails--a

wound where the dull titanic knife has turned and twisted in the hole,

leaving its edges livid, scarred, jagged, and pulsing over the white,

and red, and purple of its mighty flesh, while down below--down, down

below, in black and severed vein, boils the dull and sullen flood of the

Colorado.

It is awful. There can be nothing like it. It is the earth and sky gone

stark and raving mad. The mountains up-twirled, disbodied and inverted,

stand on their peaks and throw their bowels to the sky. Their earth is

air; their ether blood-red rock engreened. You stand upon their roots

and fall into their pinnacles, a mighty mile.

Behold this mauve and purple mocking of time and space! See yonder peak!

No human foot has trod it. Into that blue shadow only the eye of God has

looked. Listen to the accents of that gorge which mutters: "Before

Abraham was, I am." Is yonder wall a hedge of black or is it the rampart

between heaven and hell? I see greens,--is it moss or giant pines? I see

specks that may be boulders. Ever the winds sigh and drop into those

sun-swept silences. Ever the gorge lies motionless, unmoved, until I

fear. It is a grim thing, unholy, terrible! It is human--some mighty

drama unseen, unheard, is playing there its tragedies or mocking comedy,

and the laugh of endless years is shrieking onward from peak to peak,

unheard, unechoed, and unknown.

One throws a rock into the abyss. It gives back no sound. It falls on

silence--the voice of its thunders cannot reach so far. It is not--it

cannot be a mere, inert, unfeeling, brute fact--its grandeur is too

serene--its beauty too divine! It is not red, and blue, and green, but,

ah! the shadows and the shades of all the world, glad colorings touched

with a hesitant spiritual delicacy. What does it mean--what does it

mean? Tell me, black and boiling water!

It is not real. It is but shadows. The shading of eternity. Last night

yonder tesselated palace was gloom--dark, brooding thought and sin,

while hither rose the mountains of the sun, golden, blazing,

ensanguined. It was a dream. This blue and brilliant morning shows all

those burning peaks alight, while here, shapeless, mistful, brood the

shadowed towers.

I have been down into the entrails of earth--down, down by straight and

staring cliffs--down by sounding waters and sun-strewn meadows; down by

green pastures and still waters, by great, steep chasms--down by the

gnarled and twisted fists of God to the deep, sad moan of the yellow

river that did this thing of wonder,--a little winding river with death

in its depth and a crown of glory in its flying hair.

I have seen what eye of man was never meant to see. I have profaned the

sanctuary. I have looked upon the dread disrobing of the Night, and yet

I live. Ere I hid my head she was standing in her cavern halls, glowing

coldly westward--her feet were blackness: her robes, empurpled, flowed

mistily from shoulder down in formless folds of folds; her head,

pine-crowned, was set with jeweled stars. I turned away and dreamed--the

cañon,--the awful, its depths called; its heights shuddered. Then

suddenly I arose and looked. Her robes were falling. At dim-dawn they

hung purplish-green and black. Slowly she stripped them from her gaunt

and shapely limbs--her cold, gray garments shot with shadows stood

revealed. Down dropped the black-blue robes, gray-pearled and slipped,

leaving a filmy, silken, misty thing, and underneath I glimpsed her

limbs of utter light.

\* \* \* \* \*

My God! For what am I thankful this night? For nothing. For nothing but

the most commonplace of commonplaces; a table of gentlewomen and

gentlemen--soft-spoken, sweet-tempered, full of human sympathy, who made

me, a stranger, one of them. Ours was a fellowship of common books,

common knowledge, mighty aims. We could laugh and joke and think as

friends--and the Thing--the hateful, murderous, dirty Thing which in

American we call "Nigger-hatred" was not only not there--it could not

even be understood. It was a curious monstrosity at which civilized folk

laughed or looked puzzled. There was no elegant and elaborate

condescension of--"We once had a colored servant"--"My father was an

Abolitionist"--"I've always been interested in \_your people\_"--there was

only the community of kindred souls, the delicate reverence for the

Thought that led, the quick deference to the guest. You left in quiet

regret, knowing that they were not discussing you behind your back with

lies and license. God! It was simply human decency and I had to be

thankful for it because I am an American Negro, and white America, with

saving exceptions, is cruel to everything that has black blood--and

this was Paris, in the years of salvation, 1919. Fellow blacks, we must

join the democracy of Europe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Toul! Dim through the deepening dark of early afternoon, I saw its

towers gloom dusky toward the murk of heaven. We wound in misty roads

and dropped upon the city through the great throats of its walled

bastions. There lay France--a strange, unknown, unfamiliar France. The

city was dispossessed. Through its streets--its narrow, winding streets,

old and low and dark, carven and quaint,--poured thousands upon

thousands of strange feet of khaki-clad foreigners, and the echoes threw

back awkward syllables that were never French. Here was France beaten to

her knees yet fighting as never nation fought before, calling in her

death agony across the seas till her help came and with all its strut

and careless braggadocio saved the worthiest nation of the world from

the wickedest fate ever plotted by Fools.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tim Brimm was playing by the town-pump. Tim Brimm and the bugles of

Harlem blared in the little streets of Maron in far Lorraine. The tiny

streets were seas of mud. Dank mist and rain sifted through the cold air

above the blue Moselle. Soldiers--soldiers everywhere--black soldiers,

boys of Washington, Alabama, Philadelphia, Mississippi. Wild and sweet

and wooing leapt the strains upon the air. French children gazed in

wonder--women left their washing. Up in the window stood a black Major,

a Captain, a Teacher, and I--with tears behind our smiling eyes. Tim

Brimm was playing by the town-pump.

The audience was framed in smoke. It rose ghost-like out of

memories--bitter memories of the officer near dead of pneumonia whose

pain was lighted up by the nurses waiting to know whether he must be

"Jim-Crowed" with privates or not. Memories of that great last morning

when the thunders of hell called the Ninety-second to its last drive.

Memories of bitter humiliations, determined triumphs, great victories,

and bugle-calls that sounded from earth to heaven. Like memories framed

in the breath of God, my audience peered in upon me--good, brown faces

with great, kind, beautiful eyes--black soldiers of America rescuing

beloved France--and the words came in praise and benediction there in

the "Y," with its little stock of cigarettes and candies and its rusty

wood stove.

"\_Alors\_," said Madame, "\_quatre sont morts\_"--four dead--four tall,

strong sons dead for France--sons like the sweet and blue-eyed daughter

who was hiding her brave smile in the dusk. It was a tiny stone house

whose front window lipped the passing sidewalk where ever tramped the

feet of black soldiers marching home. There was a cavernous wardrobe, a

great fireplace invaded by a new and jaunty iron stove. Vast, thick

piles of bedding rose in yonder corner. Without was the crowded kitchen

and up a half-stair was our bedroom that gave upon a tiny court with

arched stone staircase and one green tree. We were a touching family

party held together by a great sorrow and a great joy. How we laughed

over the salad that got brandy instead of vinegar--how we ate the golden

pile of fried potatoes and how we pored over the post-card from the

Lieutenant of the Senegalese--dear little vale of crushed and risen

France, in the day when Negroes went "over the top" at Pont-à-Mousson.

\* \* \* \* \*

Paris, Paris by purple façade of the opera, the crowd on the Boulevard

des Italiens and the great swing of the Champs Elysées. But not the

Paris the world knows. Paris with its soul cut to the core--feverish,

crowded, nervous, hurried; full of uniforms and mourning bands, with

cafés closed at 9:30--no sugar, scarce bread, and tears so interwined

with joy that there is scant difference. Paris has been dreaming a

nightmare, and though she awakes, the grim terror is upon her--it lies

on the sand-closed art treasures of the Louvre. Only the flowers are

there, always the flowers, the Roses of England and the Lilies of

France.

\* \* \* \* \*

New York! Behind the Liberty that faces free France rise the white

cliffs of Manhattan, tier on tier, with a curving pinnacle, towers

square and twin, a giant inkwell daintily stoppered, an ancient pyramid

enthroned; beneath, low ramparts wide and mighty; while above,

faint-limned against the turbulent sky, looms the vast grace of that

Cathedral of the Purchased and Purchasing Poor, topping the world and

pointing higher.

Yonder the gray cobwebs of the Brooklyn bridges leap the sea, and here

creep the argosies from all earth's ends. We move to this swift home on

dun and swelling waters and hear as we come the heartbeats of the new

world.

\* \* \* \* \*

New York and night from the Brooklyn Bridge: The bees and fireflies flit

and twinkle in their vast hives; curved clouds like the breath of gods

hover between the towers and the moon. One hears the hiss of lightnings,

the deep thunder of human things, and a fevered breathing as of some

attendant and invincible Powers. The glow of burning millions melts

outward into dim and fairy outlines until afar the liquid music born of

rushing crowds drips like a benediction on the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

New York and morning: the sun is kissing the timid dew in Central Park,

and from the Fountain of Plenty one looks along that world street, Fifth

Avenue, and walks toward town. The earth life and curves graciously down

from the older mansions of princes to the newer shops of luxury. Egypt

and Abyssinia, Paris and Damascus, London and India caress you by the

way; churches stand aloof while the shops swell to emporiums. But all

this is nothing. Everything is mankind. Humanity stands and flies and

walks and rolls about--the poor, the priceless, the world-known and the

forgotten; child and grandfather, king and leman--the pageant of the

world goes by, set in a frame of stone and jewels, clothed in scarlet

and rags. Princes Street and the Elysian Fields, the Strand and the

Ringstrasse--these are the Ways of the World today.

\* \* \* \* \*

New York and twilight, there where the Sixth Avenue "L" rises and leaps

above the tenements into the free air at 110th Street. It circles like a

bird with heaven and St. John's above and earth and the sweet green and

gold of the Park beneath. Beyond lie all the blue mists and mysteries of

distance; beneath, the city rushes and crawls. Behind echo all the roar

and war and care and maze of the wide city set in its sullen darkening

walls, flashing weird and crimson farewells. Out at the sides the stars

twinkle.

\* \* \* \* \*

Again New York and Night and Harlem. A dark city of fifty thousand rises

like magic from the earth. Gone is the white world, the pale lips, the

lank hair; gone is the West and North--the East and South is here

triumphant. The street is crowd and leisure and laughter. Everywhere

black eyes, black and brown, and frizzled hair curled and sleek, and

skins that riot with luscious color and deep, burning blood. Humanity is

packed dense in high piles of close-knit homes that lie in layers above

gray shops of food and clothes and drink, with here and there a

moving-picture show. Orators declaim on the corners, lovers lark in the

streets, gamblers glide by the saloons, workers lounge wearily home.

Children scream and run and frolic, and all is good and human and

beautiful and ugly and evil, even as Life is elsewhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

And then--the Veil. It drops as drops the night on southern seas--vast,

sudden, unanswering. There is Hate behind it, and Cruelty and Tears. As

one peers through its intricate, unfathomable pattern of ancient, old,

old design, one sees blood and guilt and misunderstanding. And yet it

hangs there, this Veil, between Then and Now, between Pale and Colored

and Black and White--between You and Me. Surely it is a thought-thing,

tenuous, intangible; yet just as surely is it true and terrible and not

in our little day may you and I lift it. We may feverishly unravel its

edges and even climb slow with giant shears to where its ringed and

gilded top nestles close to the throne of God. But as we work and climb

we shall see through streaming eyes and hear with aching ears, lynching

and murder, cheating and despising, degrading and lying, so flashed and

fleshed through this vast hanging darkness that the Doer never sees the

Deed and the Victim knows not the Victor and Each hates All in wild and

bitter ignorance. Listen, O Isles, to these Voices from within the Veil,

for they portray the most human hurt of the Twentieth Cycle of that poor

Jesus who was called the Christ!

\* \* \* \* \*

There is something in the nature of Beauty that demands an end. Ugliness

may be indefinite. It may trail off into gray endlessness. But Beauty

must be complete--whether it be a field of poppies or a great life,--it

must end, and the End is part and triumph of the Beauty. I know there

are those who envisage a beauty eternal. But I cannot. I can dream of

great and never-ending processions of beautiful things and visions and

acts. But each must be complete or it cannot for me exist.

On the other hand, Ugliness to me is eternal, not in the essence but in

its incompleteness; but its eternity does not daunt me, for its eternal

unfulfilment is a cause of joy. There is in it nothing new or

unexpected; it is the old evil stretching out and ever seeking the end

it cannot find; it may coil and writhe and recur in endless battle to

days without end, but it is the same human ill and bitter hurt. But

Beauty is fulfilment. It satisfies. It is always new and strange. It is

the reasonable thing. Its end is Death--the sweet silence of perfection,

the calm and balance of utter music. Therein is the triumph of Beauty.

So strong is the spell of beauty that there are those who, contradicting

their own knowledge and experience, try to say that all is beauty. They

are called optimists, and they lie. All is not beauty. Ugliness and hate

and ill are here with all their contradiction and illogic; they will

always be here--perhaps, God send, with lessened volume and force, but

here and eternal, while beauty triumphs in its great completion--Death.

We cannot conjure the end of all ugliness in eternal beauty, for beauty

by its very being and definition has in each definition its ends and

limits; but while beauty lies implicit and revealed in its end, ugliness

writhes on in darkness forever. So the ugliness of continual birth

fulfils itself and conquers gloriously only in the beautiful end, Death.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last to us all comes happiness, there in the Court of Peace, where

the dead lie so still and calm and good. If we were not dead we would

lie and listen to the flowers grow. We would hear the birds sing and see

how the rain rises and blushes and burns and pales and dies in beauty.

We would see spring, summer, and the red riot of autumn, and then in

winter, beneath the soft white snow, sleep and dream of dreams. But we

know that being dead, our Happiness is a fine and finished thing and

that ten, a hundred, and a thousand years, we shall lie at rest, unhurt

in the Court of Peace.

\_The Prayers of God\_

Name of God's Name!

Red murder reigns;

All hell is loose;

On gold autumnal air

Walk grinning devils, barbed and hoofed;

While high on hills of hate,

Black-blossomed, crimson-sky'd,

Thou sittest, dumb.

Father Almighty!

This earth is mad!

Palsied, our cunning hands;

Rotten, our gold;

Our argosies reel and stagger

Over empty seas;

All the long aisles

Of Thy Great Temples, God,

Stink with the entrails

Of our souls.

And Thou art dumb.

Above the thunder of Thy Thunders, Lord,

Lightening Thy Lightnings,

Rings and roars

The dark damnation

Of this hell of war.

Red piles the pulp of hearts and heads

And little children's hands.

Allah!

Elohim!

Very God of God!

Death is here!

Dead are the living; deep--dead the dead.

Dying are earth's unborn--

The babes' wide eyes of genius and of joy,

Poems and prayers, sun-glows and earth-songs,

Great-pictured dreams,

Enmarbled phantasies,

High hymning heavens--all

In this dread night

Writhe and shriek and choke and die

This long ghost-night--

While Thou art dumb.

Have mercy!

Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!

Stand forth, unveil Thy Face,

Pour down the light

That seethes above Thy Throne,

And blaze this devil's dance to darkness!

Hear!

Speak!

In Christ's Great Name--

I hear!

Forgive me, God!

Above the thunder I hearkened;

Beneath the silence, now,--

I hear!

(Wait, God, a little space.

It is so strange to talk with Thee--

Alone!)

This gold?

I took it.

Is it Thine?

Forgive; I did not know.

Blood? Is it wet with blood?

'Tis from my brother's hands.

(I know; his hands are mine.)

It flowed for Thee, O Lord.

War? Not so; not war--

Dominion, Lord, and over black, not white;

Black, brown, and fawn,

And not Thy Chosen Brood, O God,

We murdered.

To build Thy Kingdom,

To drape our wives and little ones,

And set their souls a-glitter--

For this we killed these lesser breeds

And civilized their dead,

Raping red rubber, diamonds, cocoa, gold!

For this, too, once, and in Thy Name,

I lynched a Nigger--

(He raved and writhed,

I heard him cry,

I felt the life-light leap and lie,

I saw him crackle there, on high,

I watched him wither!)

\_Thou?\_

\_Thee?\_

\_I lynched Thee?\_

Awake me, God! I sleep!

What was that awful word Thou saidst?

That black and riven thing--was it Thee?

That gasp--was it Thine?

This pain--is it Thine?

Are, then, these bullets piercing Thee?

Have all the wars of all the world,

Down all dim time, drawn blood from Thee?

Have all the lies and thefts and hates--

Is this Thy Crucifixion, God,

And not that funny, little cross,

With vinegar and thorns?

Is this Thy kingdom here, not there,

This stone and stucco drift of dreams?

Help!

I sense that low and awful cry--

Who cries?

Who weeps?

With silent sob that rends and tears--

Can God sob?

Who prays?

I hear strong prayers throng by,

Like mighty winds on dusky moors--

Can God pray?

Prayest Thou, Lord, and to me?

\_Thou\_ needest me?

Thou \_needest\_ me?

Thou needest \_me\_?

Poor, wounded soul!

Of this I never dreamed. I thought--

\_Courage, God,

I come!\_

X

THE COMET

He stood a moment on the steps of the bank, watching the human river

that swirled down Broadway. Few noticed him. Few ever noticed him save

in a way that stung. He was outside the world--"nothing!" as he said

bitterly. Bits of the words of the walkers came to him.

"The comet?"

"The comet----"

Everybody was talking of it. Even the president, as he entered, smiled

patronizingly at him, and asked:

"Well, Jim, are you scared?"

"No," said the messenger shortly.

"I thought we'd journeyed through the comet's tail once," broke in the

junior clerk affably.

"Oh, that was Halley's," said the president; "this is a new comet, quite

a stranger, they say--wonderful, wonderful! I saw it last night. Oh, by

the way, Jim," turning again to the messenger, "I want you to go down

into the lower vaults today."

The messenger followed the president silently. Of course, they wanted

\_him\_ to go down to the lower vaults. It was too dangerous for more

valuable men. He smiled grimly and listened.

"Everything of value has been moved out since the water began to seep

in," said the president; "but we miss two volumes of old records.

Suppose you nose around down there,--it isn't very pleasant, I suppose."

"Not very," said the messenger, as he walked out.

"Well, Jim, the tail of the new comet hits us at noon this time," said

the vault clerk, as he passed over the keys; but the messenger passed

silently down the stairs. Down he went beneath Broadway, where the dim

light filtered through the feet of hurrying men; down to the dark

basement beneath; down into the blackness and silence beneath that

lowest cavern. Here with his dark lantern he groped in the bowels of the

earth, under the world.

He drew a long breath as he threw back the last great iron door and

stepped into the fetid slime within. Here at last was peace, and he

groped moodily forward. A great rat leaped past him and cobwebs crept

across his face. He felt carefully around the room, shelf by shelf, on

the muddied floor, and in crevice and corner. Nothing. Then he went back

to the far end, where somehow the wall felt different. He sounded and

pushed and pried. Nothing. He started away. Then something brought him

back. He was sounding and working again when suddenly the whole black

wall swung as on mighty hinges, and blackness yawned beyond. He peered

in; it was evidently a secret vault--some hiding place of the old bank

unknown in newer times. He entered hesitatingly. It was a long, narrow

room with shelves, and at the far end, an old iron chest. On a high

shelf lay the two missing volumes of records, and others. He put them

carefully aside and stepped to the chest. It was old, strong, and rusty.

He looked at the vast and old-fashioned lock and flashed his light on

the hinges. They were deeply incrusted with rust. Looking about, he

found a bit of iron and began to pry. The rust had eaten a hundred

years, and it had gone deep. Slowly, wearily, the old lid lifted, and

with a last, low groan lay bare its treasure--and he saw the dull sheen

of gold!

"Boom!"

A low, grinding, reverberating crash struck upon his ear. He started up

and looked about. All was black and still. He groped for his light and

swung it about him. Then he knew! The great stone door had swung to. He

forgot the gold and looked death squarely in the face. Then with a sigh

he went methodically to work. The cold sweat stood on his forehead; but

he searched, pounded, pushed, and worked until after what seemed endless

hours his hand struck a cold bit of metal and the great door swung again

harshly on its hinges, and then, striking against something soft and

heavy, stopped. He had just room to squeeze through. There lay the body

of the vault clerk, cold and stiff. He stared at it, and then felt sick

and nauseated. The air seemed unaccountably foul, with a strong,

peculiar odor. He stepped forward, clutched at the air, and fell

fainting across the corpse.

He awoke with a sense of horror, leaped from the body, and groped up the

stairs, calling to the guard. The watchman sat as if asleep, with the

gate swinging free. With one glance at him the messenger hurried up to

the sub-vault. In vain he called to the guards. His voice echoed and

re-echoed weirdly. Up into the great basement he rushed. Here another

guard lay prostrate on his face, cold and still. A fear arose in the

messenger's heart. He dashed up to the cellar floor, up into the bank.

The stillness of death lay everywhere and everywhere bowed, bent, and

stretched the silent forms of men. The messenger paused and glanced

about. He was not a man easily moved; but the sight was appalling!

"Robbery and murder," he whispered slowly to himself as he saw the

twisted, oozing mouth of the president where he lay half-buried on his

desk. Then a new thought seized him: If they found him here alone--with

all this money and all these dead men--what would his life be worth? He

glanced about, tiptoed cautiously to a side door, and again looked

behind. Quietly he turned the latch and stepped out into Wall Street.

How silent the street was! Not a soul was stirring, and yet it was

high-noon--Wall Street? Broadway? He glanced almost wildly up and down,

then across the street, and as he looked, a sickening horror froze in

his limbs. With a choking cry of utter fright he lunged, leaned giddily

against the cold building, and stared helplessly at the sight.

In the great stone doorway a hundred men and women and children lay

crushed and twisted and jammed, forced into that great, gaping doorway

like refuse in a can--as if in one wild, frantic rush to safety, they

had rushed and ground themselves to death. Slowly the messenger crept

along the walls, wetting his parched mouth and trying to comprehend,

stilling the tremor in his limbs and the rising terror in his heart. He

met a business man, silk-hatted and frock-coated, who had crept, too,

along that smooth wall and stood now stone dead with wonder written on

his lips. The messenger turned his eyes hastily away and sought the

curb. A woman leaned wearily against the signpost, her head bowed

motionless on her lace and silken bosom. Before her stood a street car,

silent, and within--but the messenger but glanced and hurried on. A

grimy newsboy sat in the gutter with the "last edition" in his uplifted

hand: "Danger!" screamed its black headlines. "Warnings wired around the

world. The Comet's tail sweeps past us at noon. Deadly gases expected.

Close doors and windows. Seek the cellar." The messenger read and

staggered on. Far out from a window above, a girl lay with gasping face

and sleevelets on her arms. On a store step sat a little, sweet-faced

girl looking upward toward the skies, and in the carriage by her

lay--but the messenger looked no longer. The cords gave way--the terror

burst in his veins, and with one great, gasping cry he sprang

desperately forward and ran,--ran as only the frightened run, shrieking

and fighting the air until with one last wail of pain he sank on the

grass of Madison Square and lay prone and still.

When he rose, he gave no glance at the still and silent forms on the

benches, but, going to a fountain, bathed his face; then hiding himself

in a corner away from the drama of death, he quietly gripped himself and

thought the thing through: The comet had swept the earth and this was

the end. Was everybody dead? He must search and see.

He knew that he must steady himself and keep calm, or he would go

insane. First he must go to a restaurant. He walked up Fifth Avenue to a

famous hostelry and entered its gorgeous, ghost-haunted halls. He beat

back the nausea, and, seizing a tray from dead hands, hurried into the

street and ate ravenously, hiding to keep out the sights.

"Yesterday, they would not have served me," he whispered, as he forced

the food down.

Then he started up the street,--looking, peering, telephoning, ringing

alarms; silent, silent all. Was nobody--nobody--he dared not think the

thought and hurried on.

Suddenly he stopped still. He had forgotten. My God! How could he have

forgotten? He must rush to the subway--then he almost laughed. No--a

car; if he could find a Ford. He saw one. Gently he lifted off its

burden, and took his place on the seat. He tested the throttle. There

was gas. He glided off, shivering, and drove up the street. Everywhere

stood, leaned, lounged, and lay the dead, in grim and awful silence. On

he ran past an automobile, wrecked and overturned; past another, filled

with a gay party whose smiles yet lingered on their death-struck lips;

on past crowds and groups of cars, pausing by dead policemen; at 42nd

Street he had to detour to Park Avenue to avoid the dead congestion. He

came back on Fifth Avenue at 57th and flew past the Plaza and by the

park with its hushed babies and silent throng, until as he was rushing

past 72nd Street he heard a sharp cry, and saw a living form leaning

wildly out an upper window. He gasped. The human voice sounded in his

ears like the voice of God.

"Hello--hello--help, in God's name!" wailed the woman. "There's a dead

girl in here and a man and--and see yonder dead men lying in the street

and dead horses--for the love of God go and bring the officers----" And

the words trailed off into hysterical tears.

He wheeled the car in a sudden circle, running over the still body of a

child and leaping on the curb. Then he rushed up the steps and tried the

door and rang violently. There was a long pause, but at last the heavy

door swung back. They stared a moment in silence. She had not noticed

before that he was a Negro. He had not thought of her as white. She was

a woman of perhaps twenty-five--rarely beautiful and richly gowned, with

darkly-golden hair, and jewels. Yesterday, he thought with bitterness,

she would scarcely have looked at him twice. He would have been dirt

beneath her silken feet. She stared at him. Of all the sorts of men she

had pictured as coming to her rescue she had not dreamed of one like

him. Not that he was not human, but he dwelt in a world so far from

hers, so infinitely far, that he seldom even entered her thought. Yet as

she looked at him curiously he seemed quite commonplace and usual. He

was a tall, dark workingman of the better class, with a sensitive face

trained to stolidity and a poor man's clothes and hands. His face was

soft and slow and his manner at once cold and nervous, like fires long

banked, but not out.

So a moment each paused and gauged the other; then the thought of the

dead world without rushed in and they started toward each other.

"What has happened?" she cried. "Tell me! Nothing stirs. All is silence!

I see the dead strewn before my window as winnowed by the breath of

God,--and see----" She dragged him through great, silken hangings to

where, beneath the sheen of mahogany and silver, a little French maid

lay stretched in quiet, everlasting sleep, and near her a butler lay

prone in his livery.

The tears streamed down the woman's cheeks and she clung to his arm

until the perfume of her breath swept his face and he felt the tremors

racing through her body.

"I had been shut up in my dark room developing pictures of the comet

which I took last night; when I came out--I saw the dead!

"What has happened?" she cried again.

He answered slowly:

"Something--comet or devil--swept across the earth this morning

and--many are dead!"

"Many? Very many?"

"I have searched and I have seen no other living soul but you."

She gasped and they stared at each other.

"My--father!" she whispered.

"Where is he?"

"He started for the office."

"Where is it?"

"In the Metropolitan Tower."

"Leave a note for him here and come."

Then he stopped.

"No," he said firmly--"first, we must go--to Harlem."

"Harlem!" she cried. Then she understood. She tapped her foot at first

impatiently. She looked back and shuddered. Then she came resolutely

down the steps.

"There's a swifter car in the garage in the court," she said.

"I don't know how to drive it," he said.

"I do," she answered.

In ten minutes they were flying to Harlem on the wind. The Stutz rose

and raced like an airplane. They took the turn at 110th Street on two

wheels and slipped with a shriek into 135th.

He was gone but a moment. Then he returned, and his face was gray. She

did not look, but said:

"You have lost--somebody?"

"I have lost--everybody," he said, simply--"unless----"

He ran back and was gone several minutes--hours they seemed to her.

"Everybody," he said, and he walked slowly back with something film-like

in his hand which he stuffed into his pocket.

"I'm afraid I was selfish," he said. But already the car was moving

toward the park among the dark and lined dead of Harlem--the brown,

still faces, the knotted hands, the homely garments, and the

silence--the wild and haunting silence. Out of the park, and down Fifth

Avenue they whirled. In and out among the dead they slipped and

quivered, needing no sound of bell or horn, until the great, square

Metropolitan Tower hove in sight. Gently he laid the dead elevator boy

aside; the car shot upward. The door of the office stood open. On the

threshold lay the stenographer, and, staring at her, sat the dead clerk.

The inner office was empty, but a note lay on the desk, folded and

addressed but unsent:

Dear Daughter:

I've gone for a hundred mile spin in Fred's new Mercedes. Shall not

be back before dinner. I'll bring Fred with me.

J.B.H.

"Come," she cried nervously. "We must search the city."

Up and down, over and across, back again--on went that ghostly search.

Everywhere was silence and death--death and silence! They hunted from

Madison Square to Spuyten Duyvel; they rushed across the Williamsburg

Bridge; they swept over Brooklyn; from the Battery and Morningside

Heights they scanned the river. Silence, silence everywhere, and no

human sign. Haggard and bedraggled they puffed a third time slowly down

Broadway, under the broiling sun, and at last stopped. He sniffed the

air. An odor--a smell--and with the shifting breeze a sickening stench

filled their nostrils and brought its awful warning. The girl settled

back helplessly in her seat.

"What can we do?" she cried.

It was his turn now to take the lead, and he did it quickly.

"The long distance telephone--the telegraph and the cable--night rockets

and then--flight!"

She looked at him now with strength and confidence. He did not look like

men, as she had always pictured men; but he acted like one and she was

content. In fifteen minutes they were at the central telephone exchange.

As they came to the door he stepped quickly before her and pressed her

gently back as he closed it. She heard him moving to and fro, and knew

his burdens--the poor, little burdens he bore. When she entered, he was

alone in the room. The grim switchboard flashed its metallic face in

cryptic, sphinx-like immobility. She seated herself on a stool and

donned the bright earpiece. She looked at the mouthpiece. She had never

looked at one so closely before. It was wide and black, pimpled with

usage; inert; dead; almost sarcastic in its unfeeling curves. It

looked--she beat back the thought--but it looked,--it persisted in

looking like--she turned her head and found herself alone. One moment

she was terrified; then she thanked him silently for his delicacy and

turned resolutely, with a quick intaking of breath.

"Hello!" she called in low tones. She was calling to the world. The

world \_must\_ answer. Would the world \_answer\_? Was the world----

Silence!

She had spoken too low.

"Hello!" she cried, full-voiced.

She listened. Silence! Her heart beat quickly. She cried in clear,

distinct, loud tones: "Hello--hello--hello!"

What was that whirring? Surely--no--was it the click of a receiver?

She bent close, she moved the pegs in the holes, and called and called,

until her voice rose almost to a shriek, and her heart hammered. It was

as if she had heard the last flicker of creation, and the evil was

silence. Her voice dropped to a sob. She sat stupidly staring into the

black and sarcastic mouthpiece, and the thought came again. Hope lay

dead within her. Yes, the cable and the rockets remained; but the

world--she could not frame the thought or say the word. It was too

mighty--too terrible! She turned toward the door with a new fear in her

heart. For the first time she seemed to realize that she was alone in

the world with a stranger, with something more than a stranger,--with a

man alien in blood and culture--unknown, perhaps unknowable. It was

awful! She must escape--she must fly; he must not see her again. Who

knew what awful thoughts--

She gathered her silken skirts deftly about her young, smooth

limbs--listened, and glided into a sidehall. A moment she shrank back:

the hall lay filled with dead women; then she leaped to the door and

tore at it, with bleeding fingers, until it swung wide. She looked out.

He was standing at the top of the alley,--silhouetted, tall and black,

motionless. Was he looking at her or away? She did not know--she did not

care. She simply leaped and ran--ran until she found herself alone amid

the dead and the tall ramparts of towering buildings.

She stopped. She was alone. Alone! Alone on the streets--alone in the

city--perhaps alone in the world! There crept in upon her the sense of

deception--of creeping hands behind her back--of silent, moving things

she could not see,--of voices hushed in fearsome conspiracy. She looked

behind and sideways, started at strange sounds and heard still stranger,

until every nerve within her stood sharp and quivering, stretched to

scream at the barest touch. She whirled and flew back, whimpering like a

child, until she found that narrow alley again and the dark, silent

figure silhouetted at the top. She stopped and rested; then she walked

silently toward him, looked at him timidly; but he said nothing as he

handed her into the car. Her voice caught as she whispered:

"Not--that."

And he answered slowly: "No--not that!"

They climbed into the car. She bent forward on the wheel and sobbed,

with great, dry, quivering sobs, as they flew toward the cable office on

the east side, leaving the world of wealth and prosperity for the world

of poverty and work. In the world behind them were death and silence,

grave and grim, almost cynical, but always decent; here it was hideous.

It clothed itself in every ghastly form of terror, struggle, hate, and

suffering. It lay wreathed in crime and squalor, greed and lust. Only in

its dread and awful silence was it like to death everywhere.

Yet as the two, flying and alone, looked upon the horror of the world,

slowly, gradually, the sense of all-enveloping death deserted them. They

seemed to move in a world silent and asleep,--not dead. They moved in

quiet reverence, lest somehow they wake these sleeping forms who had, at

last, found peace. They moved in some solemn, world-wide \_Friedhof\_,

above which some mighty arm had waved its magic wand. All nature slept

until--until, and quick with the same startling thought, they looked

into each other's eyes--he, ashen, and she, crimson, with unspoken

thought. To both, the vision of a mighty beauty--of vast, unspoken

things, swelled in their souls; but they put it away.

Great, dark coils of wire came up from the earth and down from the sun

and entered this low lair of witchery. The gathered lightnings of the

world centered here, binding with beams of light the ends of the earth.

The doors gaped on the gloom within. He paused on the threshold.

"Do you know the code?" she asked.

"I know the call for help--we used it formerly at the bank."

She hardly heard. She heard the lapping of the waters far below,--the

dark and restless waters--the cold and luring waters, as they called. He

stepped within. Slowly she walked to the wall, where the water called

below, and stood and waited. Long she waited, and he did not come. Then

with a start she saw him, too, standing beside the black waters. Slowly

he removed his coat and stood there silently. She walked quickly to him

and laid her hand on his arm. He did not start or look. The waters

lapped on in luring, deadly rhythm. He pointed down to the waters, and

said quietly:

"The world lies beneath the waters now--may I go?"

She looked into his stricken, tired face, and a great pity surged within

her heart. She answered in a voice clear and calm, "No."

Upward they turned toward life again, and he seized the wheel. The

world was darkening to twilight, and a great, gray pall was falling

mercifully and gently on the sleeping dead. The ghastly glare of reality

seemed replaced with the dream of some vast romance. The girl lay

silently back, as the motor whizzed along, and looked half-consciously

for the elf-queen to wave life into this dead world again. She forgot to

wonder at the quickness with which he had learned to drive her car. It

seemed natural. And then as they whirled and swung into Madison Square

and at the door of the Metropolitan Tower she gave a low cry, and her

eyes were great! Perhaps she had seen the elf-queen?

The man led her to the elevator of the tower and deftly they ascended.

In her father's office they gathered rugs and chairs, and he wrote a

note and laid it on the desk; then they ascended to the roof and he made

her comfortable. For a while she rested and sank to dreamy somnolence,

watching the worlds above and wondering. Below lay the dark shadows of

the city and afar was the shining of the sea. She glanced at him timidly

as he set food before her and took a shawl and wound her in it, touching

her reverently, yet tenderly. She looked up at him with thankfulness in

her eyes, eating what he served. He watched the city. She watched him.

He seemed very human,--very near now.

"Have you had to work hard?" she asked softly.

"Always," he said.

"I have always been idle," she said. "I was rich."

"I was poor," he almost echoed.

"The rich and the poor are met together," she began, and he finished:

"The Lord is the Maker of them all."

"Yes," she said slowly; "and how foolish our human distinctions

seem--now," looking down to the great dead city stretched below,

swimming in unlightened shadows.

"Yes--I was not--human, yesterday," he said.

She looked at him. "And your people were not my people," she said; "but

today----" She paused. He was a man,--no more; but he was in some larger

sense a gentleman,--sensitive, kindly, chivalrous, everything save his

hands and--his face. Yet yesterday----

"Death, the leveler!" he muttered.

"And the revealer," she whispered gently, rising to her feet with great

eyes. He turned away, and after fumbling a moment sent a rocket into the

darkening air. It arose, shrieked, and flew up, a slim path of light,

and scattering its stars abroad, dropped on the city below. She scarcely

noticed it. A vision of the world had risen before her. Slowly the

mighty prophecy of her destiny overwhelmed her. Above the dead past

hovered the Angel of Annunciation. She was no mere woman. She was

neither high nor low, white nor black, rich nor poor. She was primal

woman; mighty mother of all men to come and Bride of Life. She looked

upon the man beside her and forgot all else but his manhood, his strong,

vigorous manhood--his sorrow and sacrifice. She saw him glorified. He

was no longer a thing apart, a creature below, a strange outcast of

another clime and blood, but her Brother Humanity incarnate, Son of God

and great All-Father of the race to be.

He did not glimpse the glory in her eyes, but stood looking outward

toward the sea and sending rocket after rocket into the unanswering

darkness. Dark-purple clouds lay banked and billowed in the west. Behind

them and all around, the heavens glowed in dim, weird radiance that

suffused the darkening world and made almost a minor music. Suddenly, as

though gathered back in some vast hand, the great cloud-curtain fell

away. Low on the horizon lay a long, white star--mystic, wonderful! And

from it fled upward to the pole, like some wan bridal veil, a pale, wide

sheet of flame that lighted all the world and dimmed the stars.

In fascinated silence the man gazed at the heavens and dropped his

rockets to the floor. Memories of memories stirred to life in the dead

recesses of his mind. The shackles seemed to rattle and fall from his

soul. Up from the crass and crushing and cringing of his caste leaped

the lone majesty of kings long dead. He arose within the shadows, tall,

straight, and stern, with power in his eyes and ghostly scepters

hovering to his grasp. It was as though some mighty Pharaoh lived again,

or curled Assyrian lord. He turned and looked upon the lady, and found

her gazing straight at him.

Silently, immovably, they saw each other face to face--eye to eye. Their

souls lay naked to the night. It was not lust; it was not love--it was

some vaster, mightier thing that needed neither touch of body nor thrill

of soul. It was a thought divine, splendid.

Slowly, noiselessly, they moved toward each other--the heavens above,

the seas around, the city grim and dead below. He loomed from out the

velvet shadows vast and dark. Pearl-white and slender, she shone beneath

the stars. She stretched her jeweled hands abroad. He lifted up his

mighty arms, and they cried each to the other, almost with one voice,

"The world is dead."

"Long live the----"

"Honk! Honk!" Hoarse and sharp the cry of a motor drifted clearly up

from the silence below. They started backward with a cry and gazed upon

each other with eyes that faltered and fell, with blood that boiled.

"Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk!" came the mad cry again, and almost from their

feet a rocket blazed into the air and scattered its stars upon them. She

covered her eyes with her hands, and her shoulders heaved. He dropped

and bowed, groped blindly on his knees about the floor. A blue flame

spluttered lazily after an age, and she heard the scream of an answering

rocket as it flew.

Then they stood still as death, looking to opposite ends of the earth.

"Clang--crash--clang!"

The roar and ring of swift elevators shooting upward from below made the

great tower tremble. A murmur and babel of voices swept in upon the

night. All over the once dead city the lights blinked, flickered, and

flamed; and then with a sudden clanging of doors the entrance to the

platform was filled with men, and one with white and flying hair rushed

to the girl and lifted her to his breast. "My daughter!" he sobbed.

Behind him hurried a younger, comelier man, carefully clad in motor

costume, who bent above the girl with passionate solicitude and gazed

into her staring eyes until they narrowed and dropped and her face

flushed deeper and deeper crimson.

"Julia," he whispered; "my darling, I thought you were gone forever."

She looked up at him with strange, searching eyes.

"Fred," she murmured, almost vaguely, "is the world--gone?"

"Only New York," he answered; "it is terrible--awful! You know,--but

you, how did you escape--how have you endured this horror? Are you well?

Unharmed?"

"Unharmed!" she said.

"And this man here?" he asked, encircling her drooping form with one arm

and turning toward the Negro. Suddenly he stiffened and his hand flew to

his hip. "Why!" he snarled. "It's--a--nigger--Julia! Has he--has he

dared----"

She lifted her head and looked at her late companion curiously and then

dropped her eyes with a sigh.

"He has dared--all, to rescue me," she said quietly, "and I--thank

him--much." But she did not look at him again. As the couple turned

away, the father drew a roll of bills from his pockets.

"Here, my good fellow," he said, thrusting the money into the man's

hands, "take that,--what's your name?"

"Jim Davis," came the answer, hollow-voiced.

"Well, Jim, I thank you. I've always liked your people. If you ever want

a job, call on me." And they were gone.

The crowd poured up and out of the elevators, talking and whispering.

"Who was it?"

"Are they alive?"

"How many?"

"Two!"

"Who was saved?"

"A white girl and a nigger--there she goes."

"A nigger? Where is he? Let's lynch the damned----"

"Shut up--he's all right-he saved her."

"Saved hell! He had no business----"

"Here he comes."

Into the glare of the electric lights the colored man moved slowly, with

the eyes of those that walk and sleep.

"Well, what do you think of that?" cried a bystander; "of all New York,

just a white girl and a nigger!"

The colored man heard nothing. He stood silently beneath the glare of

the light, gazing at the money in his hand and shrinking as he gazed;

slowly he put his other hand into his pocket and brought out a baby's

filmy cap, and gazed again. A woman mounted to the platform and looked

about, shading her eyes. She was brown, small, and toil-worn, and in one

arm lay the corpse of a dark baby. The crowd parted and her eyes fell on

the colored man; with a cry she tottered toward him.

"Jim!"

He whirled and, with a sob of joy, caught her in his arms.

\_A Hymn to the Peoples\_

O Truce of God!

And primal meeting of the Sons of Man,

Foreshadowing the union of the World!

From all the ends of earth we come!

Old Night, the elder sister of the Day,

Mother of Dawn in the golden East,

Meets in the misty twilight with her brood,

Pale and black, tawny, red and brown,

The mighty human rainbow of the world,

Spanning its wilderness of storm.

Softly in sympathy the sunlight falls,

Rare is the radiance of the moon;

And on the darkest midnight blaze the stars--

The far-flown shadows of whose brilliance

Drop like a dream on the dim shores of Time,

Forecasting Days that are to these

As day to night.

So sit we all as one.

So, gloomed in tall and stone-swathed groves,

The Buddha walks with Christ!

And Al-Koran and Bible both be holy!

Almighty Word!

In this Thine awful sanctuary,

First and flame-haunted City of the Widened World,

Assoil us, Lord of Lands and Seas!

We are but weak and wayward men,

Distraught alike with hatred and vainglory;

Prone to despise the Soul that breathes within--

High visioned hordes that lie and steal and kill,

Sinning the sin each separate heart disclaims,

Clambering upon our riven, writhing selves,

Besieging Heaven by trampling men to Hell!

We be blood-guilty! Lo, our hands be red!

Not one may blame the other in this sin!

But here--here in the white Silence of the Dawn,

Before the Womb of Time,

With bowed hearts all flame and shame,

We face the birth-pangs of a world:

We hear the stifled cry of Nations all but born--

The wail of women ravished of their stunted brood!

We see the nakedness of Toil, the poverty of Wealth,

We know the Anarchy of Empire, and doleful Death of Life!

And hearing, seeing, knowing all, we cry:

Save us, World-Spirit, from our lesser selves!

Grant us that war and hatred cease,

Reveal our souls in every race and hue!

Help us, O Human God, in this Thy Truce,

To make Humanity divine!

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