

THE SOUTH CALLING NEGROES BACK

(The Literary Digest)

Not since the Civil War has the South faced an issue so grave, according to some observers, as the great exodus of Negro workers to the North that has been in progress for the past eight months, during which about 350,000 of them left their old home. This estimate is made by James W. Poe, president of the Colored Patriotic League, who says that one-third of a million Negro laborers have moved from twelve Southern States in less than a year, and that at least 73,000 have gone to Pennsylvania alone. The Wilmington Star quotes him as regretting that they should go North to work in war-industries and coal-mines, because they would be worth more to the nation by remaining in the South to help provide the country with foodstuffs that can be grown in the twelve cotton-growing states. He gives the figures of the exodus by states as follows: Virginia, 49,768; Georgia, 48,897; North Carolina, 35,576; Mississippi, 35,291; South Carolina, 27,560; Arkansas, 23,628; Tennessee, 22,632; Kentucky, 21,855; Louisiana, 16,912; Florida, 10,291; Texas, 10,870; Oklahoma, 5,836. This defection of labor, according to The University News Letter (Chapel Hill, N. C.), represents an economic loss to the South of not less than \$200,000,000 in crop wealth. At the same time that certain Southern journals urge Negroes to remain and those who have gone to return, some Northern editors also agree that it is vastly better for them to go back South. Perhaps the most striking utterance is that of the Chicago Tribune, which attracts much favorable attention among Southern editors. Down South they say that "niggers are all right in their place," according to this journal, but where is that place? It points to the fact that at Memphis, Tenn., a Negro was recently burned alive, while at East St. Louis, Ill., Negroes who had been introduced as strike-breakers were mobbed, beaten, and run out of town. "We taunt the South with race-prejudice when it burns 'a bad nigger,'" The Tribune goes on to say, "but just see how we Northerners detest even 'good niggers.'" The real race-prejudice is ours, for we say to the black man, 'God bless you, good-by,' whereas the South says, '— you, come here!'" In other words, the Northerner is a great friend of the Negro but not of a Negro, while the Southerner is a great friend of a Negro but not of the Negro, and this journal adds: "Our observation goes to show that the Negro is happiest when the white race asserts its superiority, provided that sympathy and understanding accompany the assertion. Not long ago a Virginian noticed a very gloomy black porter in a Northern hotel, and, learning that the Negro had come from Virginia, said, 'You — black fool, go back to Virginia!' The reply revealed much: 'Oh, Cunnel, dem's de fust kind wuds dat's been spoken to me since Ah come up Noff!'"

"Southerners insist that 'the nigger must be kept down.' They enforce the color-line. Yet they will work side by side with Negroes, befriend them in adversity, and overlook their minor failings. . . . They do not hate Negroes. In their hearts they like them. Said Dooley: 'I'm naught troubled whin the naygur is amon'st his oppressors, Hinnessy. What troubles me is whin he falls into th' hands iv his liberators.'"

The mob outbursts against the Negroes at East St. Louis, Ill., seem to the New York Evening Post the more unjustifiable because fifteen minutes before the outburst the mayor had addressed the labor leaders of the city and promised to stop the coming of black workmen. He also hinted that steps would be taken by deportation to relieve the situation. This incident, in the judgment of The Evening Post, should warn all employers who import Negroes in large numbers that they have a distinct duty in the supervision and guidance of the men whom they bring into a new industrial community, and it ventures the ominous presage that "there is too much danger that the East St. Louis

riots will be duplicated elsewhere before the migration of Negroes northward ceases." That the South is openly bidding for the black man is evident, according to this journal, which quotes The Florida Times-Union as follows:

"The Negroes of the South may see in this East St. Louis affair just what will happen all over the North when there is no longer enough work for all and white men want their jobs. Where are they safest—in a section where a certain offense insures their summary death and good behavior assures them safety, or in a section that in time of passion gives them no assurance of safety at all, and where their color will mark them for assault?"

The lure of higher wages is generally accepted to be the motive for migration, but, we are told, the Negro soon finds out that whatever increase he gets in wages is more than offset by the higher cost of living in Northern states. Thus the Tifton (Ga.) Gazette tells of one Buster Cullen, who went to Pittsburg from Tifton to find a fortune. Five weeks later he returned to his home town disillusioned, because he discovered that by the time he had paid for his board and keep "his wad looked like a widow's mite." What is worse, according to Buster, up North "they treat 'niggers' like red-headed stepchildren, and there is no corn-bread, absolutely nothing but light bread, and no 'nigger' wants to live on that for a working diet." The Gazette quotes another letter to "home-folks" which contains the statement that "up here, where everybody thinks there's nobody else—you tell them 'Good-mornin',' and they go on like nothing had happened!" And still another illustration is given of an old mammy in Atlanta who declined to join the exodus, saying: "I'm home and happy. I got nothing to find up dar, kaze I ain't never lost nothing dar. I'm here to stay." The Knoxville Sentinel speaks of the cruelty of the North to the Negroes and maintains that the Southern people, despite all their harsh dealings with the race when their primal passions are aroused, appreciate and value the Negroes more than their Northern friends can understand, and this journal adds:

"We venture to say that the Southern people have dealt more fairly, generously, and kindly with the Negro race since their manumission than any previously servile race in the annals of history ever experienced at the hands of their former feudal lords and masters, even though there may have been no radical social difference be-

tween them so deeply and ineradicably marked as the atipodal dye of their skin. And the Negro will still find a home and a welcome in the South when other sections reject him. The South's arms, its fields, its industries in the main, even its homes, are open to the Negro in the clearly marked but kindly relations which social customs and conditions have established here between the races."

In sharp contrast to the foregoing contention is the weight of argument of three articles in the New York Evening Post on "The Negro Exodus from the South" which are contributed by Mr. Taylor Kennerly, who is a Southerner and was formerly managing editor of the Montgomery Advertiser for two years. He states that he writes chiefly of Alabama, but holds that his statements apply in a general way to Georgia, Mississippi, Florida, parts of Louisiana, and the two Carolinas. Nothing is further from his mind than even to suggest any change in social standards of the white man and the Negro in this section, he tells us, but at the same time he wants to drive home "the fact that the whole economic, commercial, educational, and moral attitude which the white man has assumed, and still assumes, toward the Negro is wrong; and that while the white man has robbed the Negro of millions of dollars through keeping the black man in ignorance, he has also lost billions through the same method, and will continue to do so until he himself changes these deplorable conditions—conditions which should not be tolerated in any civilized community." The very men who have power to change these conditions are crying the loudest about the Negro exodus, we are told, and "they want to keep the Negro in the South, and they are doing everything in their power to do so, except the one thing that will succeed—giving him a square deal."

"Willie," said his mother, "I wish you would run across the street and see how old Mrs. Brown is this morning."

A few minutes later Willie returned and reported:

"Mrs. Brown says it's none of your business how old she is."—New York Times.

Nobody idle, but the parasite and he sits round all night.

It should have been the kaiser and not the king the allies deposed.

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