

Dawn of Tomorrow

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Editorial

We are pleased to give our entire Editorial Page to this excellent article from the Canadian Baptist. We have often used some of the same facts in addresses before white audiences. On one occasion a member of our audience who was a learned man, said to me (after the address) 'Your address was well delivered, however, I doubt the authenticity of your data.' Perhaps he will string along with more ease of conscience with such an authority as Prof. C. H. Parrish, Ph.D.

THE NEGRO AND WORLD PROGRESS

By President C. H. Parrish, Ph.D.,
Simmons University Louisville

It is not the purpose of the speaker to disseminate some erroneous propaganda, nor to overlaud and create in black people a false, foolish pride that would produce in them anything that is akin to race prejudice and a disregard for other races and their successful efforts. The main purpose of this effort is to stimulate in the black race a just, sane, well-balanced race consciousness, a thing essentially required in proper racial development. Further the speaker wishes to call the attention of other races of the world to some of the worthy efforts of an ambitious race, struggling upward, not without tremendous handicaps, and thus invite their good will for and co-operation with negroes in their lawful aspirations to develop themselves, reach their rightful destiny and make their own peculiar gifts to a world that has made valuable contributions to their own progress. Because too little is generally known of the black man's virtues and praiseworthy efforts there exists in respect to him a depressing race psychosis and some adverse, unfavorable inter-racial attitudes. Dowd, the Professor of Sociology of Oklahoma University said in his books, "The Negro in American Life;" "Strange to say our institutions of learning contain much more information about the character and different breeds of cattle, swine and poultry than of human beings. Our sociological literature unwittingly cultivates a prejudice against alien races by vivid pictures of the vice and crime which these races often exhibit under slum conditions, and do not take the trouble to inform the student what these races have done, and are doing for the enrichment of our culture." Mr. Oldham, the author of "Christianity and the Race Problem," said: "It is necessary that we should transcend our casual experiences and our prejudices by inventing, creating and organizing a machinery of knowledge." Again he said: "It is vain to look for understanding when illusions are cherished on both sides." These statements apply to Negroes with more aptness and cogency than they do to others. The negro has been favored with a peculiar

genius, and if civilization means the conquest of diseases, the production of wealth, the development of the arts, philosophy, literature, religion and of all that will make safe and promote the happiness and progress of humanity, then a close, unbiased perusal of human history will show that the black man has made some distinct, vital contributions to it.

While this effort will be confined mainly to a discussion of the achievements of the American negro, it is not out of place to call your attention to the negro's early history in his native land. The noted negro historian, Woodson, said: "In his native country the negro produced a civilization contemporaneous with the nations of the ancient Mediterranean; he influenced the cultures then cast in the crucible of time, and he taught the world the use of iron by which science and initiative have remade the world." Ancient Egypt knew him, both bond and free, his blood flowed in the veins of not a few of the mighty pharaohs. Dubois said: "There was Nefertari, the black queen of Egypt who drove out the Hyksos, and was as Flinders Petrie says, 'the most venerated figure of Egyptian history.' There was the black Mutemua, mother of the great Amenhotep III, who built the temple at Luxor and whose direct descendant was the royal princess who by marriage made Tut-ankhamen, Pharaoh of Egypt. As the late Professor Chamberlain wrote: 'Besides these marked individual instances, there is the fact that the Egyptian race itself in general had a considerable element of Negro blood and one of the prime reasons why no civilization of the type of that of the Nile arose in other parts of the continent, if such a thing were possible, was that Egypt acted as a sort of channel by which the genius of Negroland was drafted off into the service of Mediterranean and Asiatic culture.'

A study of the history of the Semitic people will show that the negro as a slave or a free man has influenced their civilization. The negro touched and helped to influence the advancement of the European peoples. Churchward says: "The earliest form of human society was brought into Europe by the Nilotic negro." It is a well-established fact that Nimrod, the first builder of a city was a descendant of Ham. It is said that he laid the foundation of Babylon, the world's first great empire. The Azilians, a dark people, were the first to populate Europe. They were called Iberians and led in producing painted pebbles and artistically designed stones. This perhaps is a sufficient background, so let us consider more particularly the service of the American Negro. When this is done, it will be demonstrated that the negro as an explorer, a pioneer, a laborer, a soldier, an educator and a Christian has done heroic service trying to promote world progress.

For a long time there existed a legend that negroes had visited America prior to Columbus. Recently this has been attested by some facts and the testimony of great scholars. Leo. Werner of Harvard University says, "Africans were the first to visit the shores of America." Three things seem to prove the claim: First, the likeness of the negro which occurs repeatedly in Indian carvings among the relics of the Mound Builders and in Mexican temples." Second, the trace of negro customs in the religious worship of the Indians in their method of building their defences and in their trade practices. Columbus said that he had been told of a land southwest of Cape Verde Islands where the black folk had been trading." J. B. Thacher in his life of Christopher Columbus, says, "There is no question whatever as to the reality of the statement in regard to the presence in America of the African pombeiros (negro traders) previous to Columbus."

Weiner thinks the presence of negroes with their trading masters in America before Columbus is proved by the representation of negroes in American sculpture and design, by the occurrence of a black nation at Darien early in the 16th century, but more

specifically by Columbus' emphatic reference to negro traders from Guinea, who trafficked in a gold alloy, guanin of precisely the same composition and bearing the same name, as frequently referred to by early writers in Africa." And thirdly, many of the productions of America which have been hitherto considered as indigenous and brought into use especially by the Indians, may easily have been African in origin, as for instance, tobacco, cotton, sweet potatoes, and peanuts. It is quite possible that many if not all of these came through the African negro, being in some cases indigenous to negro Africa, and in other cases transmitted from Arabs by the negroes. Tobacco particularly was known in Africa and is mentioned in early America continually in connection with the negroes. All of these things were spread in America along the routes starting with the mingling of negroes and Indians in the West Indies and coming up through Florida to Canada. "The Arawak Indians, who especially show the effects of contact with negroes, and fugitive negroes, together with negroid Caribs, migrated northward and it was they who led Ponce de Leon to search for the Fountain Bimini, where old men become young."

"The chief cultural influence of the negro in America was exerted by a negro colony in Mexico, most likely from Teotihuacan and Tuxtla, who may have been instrumental in establishing the city of Mexico. From here their influence invaded the neighboring tribes and ultimately, directly or indirectly, reached Peru."

The mounds of the "Mound Builders" were probably replicas of negro forts in Africa."

Some of the world's most noted historians show that negroes were with Columbus when he discovered America. After this they accompanied most of the early explorers. Negroes were with Balboa when he discovered the Pacific Ocean. They helped him to build his crude boats. Cortez did not conquer Mexico without the aid of negroes. One of these was the first to sow grain in Mexico. A negro Estivancico, was one of the first persons to reach Mexico from Florida by land. He led expeditions in Mexico and Central America and discovered what is now known as the States of New Mexico and Arizona. Negroes were with Lewis and Clarke, and with Fremont when he made his expedition into California and discovered Clamoth Lake. Negroes accompanied De Soto, one of them being the first settler from the old world in Alabama. "Menendez had with him a company of trained negro artisans and agriculturists when he founded St. Augustine. Negroes assisted in the exploration of Guatemala and the conquest of Chili, Peru, and Venezuela. William Alexander Leidoroff, a negro, once owned the largest home in San Francisco Bay. A negro was the first home-owner of Chicago, the most renowned city of this age."

And as the negro was with the first explorers and pioneers, so was he with the last. When Commodore Perry completed the world's last thrilling expedition, the discovery of the North Pole, there stood by his side his most faithful assistant Matthew A. Henson, a negro. Perry says he chose Henson because he had been with him since 1897, and primarily because of his adaptability and fitness for the work, and secondly because of his loyalty. He said, "He is a better dog-driver and can handle a sledge better than any living man except some of the best Eskimos themselves." He could and did solve the problems of the Arctic, was a fine stove builder and a good interpreter.

In an abiding civilization labor is a basic factor. A careful survey of the world's progress will show that the black race has made its contribution as an efficient and a vital labor force. This race's singular physical stamina, the ease with which it has adapted itself to climatic conditions, and its wonderfully fine spirit and disposition have fitted it to be one of the world's most useful and responsive labor elements. The American negro found

America's vast rich resources undervalued and useless. He braved the scorching summers, endured its cold wintry blasts, while he labored to turn its dense wilderness into smiling fields rich with needful commodities. He met the perils of diseases, plagues and beasts in this pioneer work, saving others, but sometimes losing himself. The negro is in a certain sense the forerunner in the world's commerce. At first as a slave subject, he was America's chief, if not its only commerce. The negro developed the art of producing rice, sugar, cotton, wheat, potatoes and corn. Because of the cheapness of their labor, they made cotton fabrics so cheap when compared with linen, silk and woolen goods, that cotton was made a universal demand. This gave a new impetus to national and international commerce, bringing the human races of the world into closer relationships. With cotton a universal demand, newer and more skilled positions were created for whites. This created a leisure class among whites, a thing essentially needed in building a substantial civilization. The labor of negro slaves helped to make possible the education of several generations of whites. Without this, Washington, Jefferson, Madison and others would not have been equipped to help their government as they did.

The tremendous task of building the Panama canal was accomplished by negro labor. The industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries had as its basis negro labor. America has made its contributions to the world's progress, but without the negro and his labor, America as it is would not be. The negro laborer was the first one to bring into common labor spiritual values and a renewed sense of the worth of human life. The most practical expression of this idea is found to-day in labor organizations and movements set to humanize labor and give labor justice.

The impetus given civilization by negroes by their brawn and brain helped to promote inventions. It is generally known that African negroes were first to smelt iron and make useful instruments from it. It is said that the earliest tools and weapons made of iron were fashioned after discoveries and inventions of these black people. Slavery was no school to develop brain power and self-direction, yet the negro during that period did much to promote the world's advancement through his inventions. Because the negro was not a citizen at this time and could not patent his inventions, his owner would patent in his name many of the negro's inventions. According to the United States Patent Office, appliances made by slaves were used by Eli Whitney in his invention of the cotton gin. The records of the Patent Office show fifteen hundred inventions by Negroes.

An American negro, Jan Matzgerger, invented the "nigger-head laster," which was a machine for attaching soles to the vamps of shoes. This invention revolutionized the shoe-making industry and was the first invention that enabled the making of shoes in large quantities by machinery, resulting in the mass production and cheaper price of foot-wear the world over. Elijah McCoy invented a lubricating cup which is used wherever revolving machinery is used. Granville T. Woods patented more than fifty technical electrical devices many of which have been assigned to such companies as the General Electric, the Telephone and Westinghouse.

Benjamin Banneker was a noted astronomer and mathematician. He was the first American to make a clock, and published one of the first almanacs in the United States. It is said that Banneker's Principles for International Peace, announced in 1793, were similar to the League of Nations one hundred and twenty-five years ahead of President Wilson.

He—"I feel like a dumb owl."

She—"How's that?"

He—"I don't give a hoot."