



# **The Ballotless Victim of One-Party by Archibald H. Grimke**

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OCCASIONAL PAPERS, NO. 16.

THE AMERICAN NEGRO ACADEMY.

THE BALLOTLESS VICTIM OF ONE-PARTY GOVERNMENTS.

ANNUAL ADDRESS BY ARCHIBALD H. GRIMKE

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THE BALLOTLESS VICTIM OF ONE-PARTY GOVERNMENTS.

The legal status of the Negro in the United States is difficult to define or describe, because on paper he is an American citizen, entitled to the rights of an American citizen, but in practice he does not get what he is entitled to or anything like it in certain parts of the Republic. His life is safe-guarded by written law, and so is his liberty and his activities in pursuit of happiness and to better his condition. Moreover in order that he may protect himself against the predatory aggression and greed of other citizens he is invested by the supreme law of the land with the right to vote, with a voice in the Government, to enable him to defend himself against the enactment of bad and unequal laws and against their bad and unequal administration. Certainly the Negro seems to be the equal in rights of any other American. That he is on paper there is not a doubt, but that he is not in reality there is

not a doubt either. What he is entitled to does not anywhere in the South and in some states of the North square itself with what he actually enjoys. There is an enormous discrepancy in his case between National promise or guarantees and National performance or possessions. He is an American citizen under the National Constitution. To be sure he is, but with a big qualification. He has the right to reach up and out and to grow in every direction like other American citizens whose race and color are different from his own. Not a doubt of it in legal theory but when he puts his theoretical rights to the test of fact he finds that he is different, that he may not do many of the things which white men all about him are doing all the time. He finds that even the Chinese who are denied citizenship in the Republic, receive better treatment, are accorded larger liberties as men than are allowed him in the South.

Why is this? Why does the Negro occupy this very anomalous position in his country? Is it because he is an alien? It cannot really be that, because he is not an alien. But perhaps it is because the whites choose to make believe that he is an alien, which comes nearer the real reason. Nevertheless no alien is he any more than are the whites themselves, if duration of occupancy of the soil has anything to do with making a race native and to the manner born. Is it because the Negro has proved himself an undesirable citizen? Certainly not if past services to the country of the greatest value are any proof to the contrary. In the Revolutionary War he was no insignificant factor in achieving American independence; and in the War of 1812 which defended this independence against British aggression; and in the Civil War which saved the Union and abolished slavery; and in the Spanish-American War which removed a chronic peril to the National peace and added immensely to the National domain. Nor has he failed as a laborer, for he does annually his share of the work of the Nation, and in the production of its wealth. Without Negro labor how much less cotton would the South produce annually, or sugar or rice or tobacco, think you? His labor besides is very much in evidence in southern mines and mills and trades. Then, has he ever plotted against the Government, state or national, was he ever as a class a menace to law and order, or an enemy to property, or a breeder of industrial unrest and violence? On the contrary has he not been patient and peaceful and cheerful under wrongs which would have made any other

class of Americans sullen and dangerous and lawless? No, he is not an undesirable citizen for these sufficient reasons, but there is yet another good answer on this head. Negro labor could not in any considerable numbers leave the South voluntarily because Southern capital and landed interests would not let it, would resist by force if found necessary its migration to other parts.

This sounds singular in this land of the free and it is singular, for of no other class of American labor could it be said that its right to migrate from one state to another is actually obstructed by law and would be resisted by force. It is singular but it is nevertheless true. If a thousand, or ten thousand, or a hundred thousand agricultural laborers in the West were to make up their minds to move to the cotton belt of the South, they would be free to do so, regardless of the injury which Western farmers might suffer in consequence of their migration. But if one hundred thousand, or ten thousand, or even one thousand Negro cotton pickers desired to quit picking cotton and to seek their fortune in other states, does anyone imagine that they would be allowed to depart in peace, that they would not find rather by violent experience that they are not at liberty to make the change? The South does not regard the Negro laborer then as undesirable but quite the contrary--only it wants to retain possession of it on its own terms, not on those advantageous to that labor.

As an American citizen then the Negro has a paper right to move freely from one place to another, but in the South were he to attempt to realize on this right he would in all probability find himself realizing on a totally different proposition--maybe the chain gang at the hands of a prejudiced court on some trumped up charge of an employer, or death at the hands of a mob. This sounds amazing and it is amazing because it fits the Negro's case so exactly, because it is an accurate description of his condition as an agricultural laborer in many of the Southern states.

On every hand over against his paper rights as a citizen, the Negro faces facts which make his citizenship seem like a snare and a delusion. Let us suppose that a member of the American Negro Academy wishes with wife or daughter to visit Florida for his health. He cannot make the journey there

like a white man, whether citizen or foreigner, or like any other traveller to that section whatever his race since he be not a Negro. And it makes no difference how refined or educated or wealthy or infirm or aged a colored passenger may be, whether man, woman or child, he encounters the same unjust and unequal treatment at the hands of the railroads. What though he has paid for himself and wife or daughter the same fare which passengers of the favored class pay, he finds that there is a vast difference between what he gets and what they get for precisely the same money. They get always the best accommodations for themselves and families, while he gets the worst. There is not a restaurant along the route where he may get a meal, and not a hotel which would give him a bed over night. If he can afford it he may procure a seat in a Pullman, and then again he may not be able to do so, and in this case as in the event of his not being able to afford to buy a seat in a Pullman, he must make the journey in a "Jim Crow" car, without separate toilet arrangements for the sexes, deficient in soap and towels, in water and in general and particular cleanliness, exposed constantly to the intrusions and the fumes, alcoholic and tobacco, of white men passing to and from their smoker, which is one-half of the "Jim Crow" coach and divided from it only by an inadequate partition.

The colored passenger is, to be sure, an American citizen on paper, but what is it worth to him under the circumstances? Can it compel railroads to furnish him decent accommodations, which federal law provides shall be equal to those furnished to white passengers, and for which the colored passenger pays the same fare as the white one? It is notorious that the accommodations furnished by the railroads in interstate commerce to their colored passengers are inferior to those which they furnish white passengers for the same fare. The Interstate Commerce Commission knows this and knows it well, yet it makes no determined and persistent attempt to compel railroads to give to their colored passengers accommodations equal to those which they furnish their white ones. It is too busy attending to the more important business relating to the property rights and interests of shippers and capitalists to spare the time to break up an evil which makes the existence of colored interstate passengers an unbroken experience of bitter hardships and humiliations. Surely there are American citizens and American citizens--citizens whom Government protects and enables to

make good their claim to equality before the law, and other citizens whom Government does not protect or enable to make good their claim to equality before the law. And to this latter class belongs the Negro nearly every time and almost everywhere.

The Negro is the great American anomaly. Judged by his rights on paper his citizenship is indisputable, but judged by his rights in fact it is full of mutilations and amputations which disfigure it almost beyond recognition. One-half of it appears in the light clothed with fragments of his rights, and the other half is in eclipse, exposed naked to biting cold and bitter wrong. He appeals to good men and true in the South and in the North and in the Government too, to give him what he is entitled to. He does not get it or anything like it. There does not appear to be common honesty and decency enough in the railroads to give him what he pays for as an interstate traveller, human compassion to say nothing of common justice enough in the Interstate Commerce Commission to enforce against the railroads the law made by the Government to conciliate the race prejudice of the South. The separate car feature of the Railroad Rate Bill was inserted in deference to the demand of the South, and the equal accommodation feature as an act of plain commercial justice to the Negro. The South has never failed to get its separate cars, while the Negro has never failed either to receive the most unequal accommodations in open violation of the provisions of that bill.

But this is not all or anything like all that mars almost beyond recognition the citizenship of the Negro. If one doubts this, let him go into the South and let him venture to incite the Negroes there to an assertion of their rights. Freedom of the press is theirs under the Constitution. Does anyone suppose that they would be allowed to say publicly what they think about the un-Christian and undemocratic way in which they are treated? Let them try it and see what will happen to them, that is, if they be wholly reckless of consequences. Freedom of the press is another of their rights, one of the boasted bulwarks of the Constitution. Does anyone suppose that they would be allowed to write as freely or anything like as freely about white men and women, especially the latter, as white men write about colored men and women? Let some colored editor make the experiment and tell afterward what happened to him hot on the heels of his article. He may not be able to

enlighten the public but the associated press dispatch will give the grim facts relating to the end of that editor, who undertook to monkey with the buzz saw of the freedom of the press in a Southern community.

Another of the sacred rights which appertain to the Negro's American citizenship is the right of public assembly to consider his grievances and discuss measures for their redress. Well, if any group of Negroes in almost any part of the South are hunting for trouble, let them get up a public meeting for such a purpose, and give vent to the righteous indignation against oppressions which ought to stir the blood of any man who is not a slave, and then watch results. A flaming spirit will presently appear in the midst of that meeting, and it will not be the flaming spirit of liberty, but of a Southern mob on arson and murder bent. Negro property will be burned and Negro blood will be shed, and that without stint or mercy. The Negro's Constitutional right to assemble to consider his wrongs is in reality too weak to resist the murderous violence of a Southern mob. The mob burns Negroes and their property almost everywhere in the South with absolute impunity. Nothing is done by the authorities to punish the mob or to protect their victims. And yet both the mob and its victims are American citizens, entitled alike on paper to the law's protection and amenable alike to its penalties. The white man enjoys a monopoly of the first and the Negro gets the lion's share of the second. The colored man who has the temerity to agitate for his rights in the South may find himself agitating speedily at the end of a rope, unless he more speedily finds some hole in the ground to give him the protection which Government refuses him. He would in that event be surer of the thing which he seeks if the hole in the ground were a hole in some grave yard, for then the hole might be pulled in after him, when he would find rest at last--surcease from all the cruel perplexities and inequalities of his American citizenship.

Again I ask why is all this thus? It is not because the Negro is an alien or because he is an undesirable citizen. For he is not that at all, as we have seen, but quite the contrary. But how explain this enormous contradiction between the rights which he is legally entitled to and those which he actually possesses? Here he is fifty years after emancipation, forty-four years after his investiture with American citizenship, and forty-two years

after the adoption of the great Amendment to the Constitution which gave him the right to vote, a voice in making the laws, not more than half free, than half a citizen in many States of the Union. Why is this so, I ask again? Is it not because he is the ballotless victim in those states of one-party governments in which he is denied a voice? In 1866 Governor John A. Andrew foresaw clearly what would be the fate of the Negro in the old slave states without the ballot. The condition which the great War Governor foresaw then fits remarkably well the Negro's actual condition to-day in certain sections of the nation. "Meanwhile," he said, "the disfranchised freedmen, hated by some because he is black, contemned by some because he has been a slave, feared by some because of the antagonisms of society, is condemned to the condition of a hopeless pariah of a merciless civilization. In the community he is not of it. He neither belongs to a master nor to society." The thing which John A. Andrew foresaw in 1866 as likely to come to pass in case of disfranchisement of the blacks, has been coming to pass ever since. And the cause which has reduced the Negro to his present anomalous position in the Republic of which he is a citizen, is his lack of the right to vote, which makes its possessor a part of the community in which he lives, and enables him to make that community respond to his needs as a vital part of its body social and politic.

The Negro in the mass is a disfranchised man. His political influence in Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia is practically at the zero point. The mass of the disfranchised in those seven Southern States is so great that by the law of gravitation its very weight and number affect more or less adversely the status of the rest of the race in other states. The disfranchised Negro operates in many ways to depreciate the rights of the enfranchised Negro, and to draw him by the invisible threads of race kinship and of race prejudice toward if not quite within the zone of his own limitations and disabilities. A disfranchised class in an industrial republic like ours is as much at the mercy of an enfranchised class as is a flock of shepherdless sheep at the mercy of a pack of wolves. The wolves will devour the sheep and the enfranchised class will prey on the disfranchised class. To the wall the weak will be driven and harried and destroyed whether they be sheep or men, and this the strong will do every time whether they be men or wolves. The shepherd protects



the sheep from the depredations of the wolves, and the ballot protects poverty against property, a weak race or class against the hate and aggressions of stronger ones within the same country.

A citizen without the ballot in America is in fact, whatever he may be in law, a de-citizenized man--exposed in consequence to the enmities, the jealousies, the insults and the violence of other citizens who are more fortunate in this regard. He is, whatever may be his legal status on paper, a proscribed man, subject to unmerited and unmeasured ignominies and injustices at the hands of his country, its society, its passions and prejudices. Governor Andrew was right, a disfranchised man, a disfranchised class must become ultimately, "The hopeless pariah of a merciless civilization." This is the peril, the fate which hangs over the colored race at the close of the first fifty years of its emancipation.

Governor Andrew's scheme for the reconstruction of the rebel states included not only the extension of the suffrage to the blacks but the re-admission to their full citizenship of the class of old slaveholders who had carried those states out of the Union. They were needed as leaders in the work of restoration and reconstruction, he shrewdly argued. And he was right. They were indeed the natural leaders of the South, and had they turned their backs upon the past and faced patriotically the new problems and the new posture of their affairs they might have led both races into the promised land of freedom and peace and Southern industrial expansion and greatness. Had they seized their golden opportunity for progressive and constructive statesmanship, the sceptre of their ascendancy in the governments of their section could not have been wrested from them by another class of whites, risen since the war, who distrust and hate them, but they might instead have transmitted their ascendancy undiminished to their descendants, who ought to be today the leaders of the new South.

The course laid down by Governor Andrew was not followed either by the South or by the North. The Southern leaders taking advantage of the opportunity given them by Andrew Johnson reconstructed their section along the lines of their old social system, reducing its changes to a minimum. They emerged out of their reconstruction operation with a Negro

serf system to take the place of their old slave system. The Negro as a serf was just about as valuable as an industrial asset to the great landlords and to the small ones too for that matter, as had been the Negro as a slave. Just about as much unpaid and involuntary labor could be got out of the first as out of the last. Thus did the old master class perform their task without changing materially their old social system. But they likewise issued from their labors not less fortunate in another respect. Their old political power would not suffer any radical change in consequence of the abolition of slavery either. For whereas five slaves had counted for them in the ante bellum apportionment of representatives as three freemen, five serfs would count in the post-bellum apportionment as five free men--a pretty large gain for the new power over the old one in federal numbers. But in achieving this double success the old master class overreached itself. The return of the South into the newly restored Union stronger as a serf power than it had been as a slave power aroused the instant fear of the North and set Congress in motion to thwart such reappearance of that section into the arena of national politics.

Congress thereupon took upon itself the work of Southern reconstruction. The extreme gravity of the situation as it affected the Negro lay in the political solidity of that section with its one-party governments in which he was denied a voice. His freedom could not long survive such a combination of Southern race prejudice and passion and political power as constituted at that time the solid South and its one-party governments. They were then and they continue to be the greatest obstacle to the freedom and advancement of the Negro as an American citizen. They signaled their first entrance upon the stage of national affairs by an attempt to create a serf class out of their former slaves. When I say that they constitute the greatest obstacle to the freedom and advancement of the Negro, I mean, of course, the greatest obstacle outside of the Negro himself. For I take it that no race that possesses intelligence, industry and character, coupled with unity of purpose and action can be kept forever out of its rights and in a backward state even by the American white people, accomplished as they are in this species of national wickedness, unless they intend to reverse the wheel of their progress and to retrograde in free institutions and civilization.

Against Southern political solidity and its one-party governments Congress directed its reconstruction measures. With the dissolution of this solidity and the introduction of bi-party in place of one-party governments the Republican leaders looked for the passing of the danger to Northern sectional supremacy and the freedom of the Negro. The freedmen were utilized at this juncture to effect the necessary changes in the Southern situation which the exigency demanded. He was first raised to citizenship, and when that proved inadequate to meet the emergency, he was invested with the right to vote on equal terms with the whites. This great constitutional revolution in the status of the Negro laid the basis for a political revolution in the old slave states also. The solid South was dissolved for the nonce and two-party governments made their re-entrance upon the stage of Southern affairs. There followed prompt repeal of the reactionary legislation hostile to the Negro, which had signaled the rise to power of the solid South and its one-party governments. The North received its share likewise of the gains incident to this revolution in the increase of its partisan strength in both branches of the National Legislature, and which in turn confirmed its political domination in the Union.

The changes wrought in the South by the reconstruction measures did not last. Those measures afforded temporary relief and that was all. They did not go deep enough and besides the whites refused to cooperate with the blacks to make them a success. They failed to moderate or abate Southern opinions, race prejudice and passions and were therefore doomed to fail as an experiment in social and political reconstruction. Social and political reconstruction in those states it seems now must come from within and by voluntary action not from without and by compulsory legislation. This is true today whatever might have been possible in this regard immediately after the overthrow of the Southern Confederacy. What was attempted then and failed would certainly fail today if it were possible to repeat the self same experiment. The repetition of such an attempt, however, being wholly outside of the range of the probable in American politics makes all speculation as to what might be its fate therefore nugatory.

After the Presidential election of 1876, the North abandoned its attempt to reconstruct the South and to keep it reconstructed according to its standard of justice and political proportion. The stream of reaction against the Negro set in strongly from that time and it has gathered volume each succeeding year since. The failure of the old master class to seize the opportunity which had come to them a second time, following the collapse of the Rebellion, for progressive and constructive leadership of their section on the race question was an egregious blunder. They set in motion instead the forces and passions which have at length wrested the ballot from the Negro. But they themselves have not escaped the consequences of their egregious blunder, for a new class of whites have in turn wrested from them their leadership in Southern affairs. The black seeds of this blunder of the old master class to lead their section in social justice and progress, the bitter years have ploughed deep into the life of both races. From the black seeds of their blunder black crops of race hatred and crime and misery have been reaped annually by the South along with those other crops of cotton and rice and sugar and tobacco, and sent like them to all parts of the Republic.

The process of Southern political solidification, partially suspended for a few years, resumed promptly after 1876 all of its natural functions and its one party governments. Since that time legislation hostile to the Negro has increased enormously in that section. Its old reconstructed State Constitutions have been one by one revised most favorably to the whites and most unfavorably and unjustly for the blacks. For what with grandfather and understanding clauses, educational and property qualifications, partisan registration boards and election supervisors and white primaries, the great majority of the colored people have been excluded from the electorate, from any voice in the Government, while the vote of the small minority who are included in the electorate has been reduced to a nullity by their exclusion from the white primaries. The states which have thus revised their constitutions have thereby effected the practical disfranchisement of their entire colored population. While they have done this they have managed at the same time to leave the ballot in the hands of every white man.

Under such unequal conditions, the white man is immune from legislation and administration unfriendly to his class, while the black man is exposed to the aggressions of this favored class; either directly through mobs or indirectly through hostile legislation and administration, which fix upon him the brand of a caste whose members have no rights in Southern society which white men are bound to respect. Such social injustice and political inequality as exist between the races in the South are bad for the whites as they are bad for the blacks--are very bad for their collective interests and for the National interests of the great industrial democracy of which they form a part. Is it astonishing then that under such circumstances there have sprung up and flourish in the South the peonage and convict lease systems, the plantation lease and credit systems, contract labor and "Jim Crow" laws, lynching and the inequitable distribution of the public school funds between the races? For the Southern white man, and he is not different from any other white man or black man either for that matter who possesses irresponsible power over others, regulates his conduct toward the Negro in his midst by the law of might, which allows him with a good conscience to do to the Negro whatever he wants to do, and to take from him whatever he wants to take whether life or liberty, while it forbids his victim to do what he wants to do; or to retain what belongs to him as an American citizen whether it be his life or his liberty--that is, to do so by identically the same means which white men use to retain what belongs to them under similar circumstances.

Things would undoubtedly be different for the colored people in those states had they though slight, some positive and appreciable influence at the polls. Their condition would not even then be ideal--far from it. But their hard lot as men would improve, their worth as citizens, their social and industrial value to their community, state and country would rise correspondingly in the scale of being and character, with the increased freedom, self-respect and security which in consequence would come to them as a race. Legislatures and administrative officers would begin to make some response to their claim for social justice and political rights, and the courts would begin also to lend a more attentive ear to their rights of person and property. The end of all those terrible systems which exploit and rob and oppress them and keep them poor and ignorant and weak, the sad

victims of race prejudice and greed and cruelty, would grow nearer to the perfect day of the race's final deliverance as American citizens. They would begin to get for their children more and better schools and longer school terms, and for their teachers more equal pay as compared with that received by white teachers for similar service.

Such is the deplorable situation of the Negro in the South at the close of the first fifty years of his freedom. There will be no improvement in that situation to any material extent until he gets the ballot, a voice in the government of those states. He can not obtain a voice in those governments of and by himself. He must get help from some power outside of himself. But from whom and in what direction ought he to look for it? Not certainly from the North, from the Republican Party. For they gave up long ago trying to solve the problem how to make a vote in that section count as much as a vote in the solid South. They will not again enact a Force Bill or attempt to do so or anything like it. They have during recent years made no movement to execute that clause of the Fourteenth Amendment which provides for a reduction of Southern representation in the lower Branch of Congress proportioned to the number of the disfranchised male population of those states, and they have in fact no disposition to do so. On the contrary non-interference is the ominous word which now gags the Northern people and press, its pulpit and platform and hobbles the action of the general government. Indeed, the outgoing occupant of the White House has carried the policy of non-interference to extreme limits. For he it is who laid down the rule at the beginning of his administration, and has observed it strictly for four years, that it would be unwise to make appointments of colored men to federal office in the South whenever the South objects to such appointments. In consequence of the consistent enforcement of this rule colored federal office-holders in the South are like angels' visits to that section, few and far between. The South, as we have seen, has succeeded most thoroughly in depriving the Negro in its midst of any voice in its governments and it has shut him out of state offices, and now thanks to President Taft, has at last succeeded in depriving him of holding federal office in its midst likewise.

But there yet remains to the Southern colored man a tattered and bedraggled remnant of his citizenship in that section, if indeed even that shall be left to him four years hence. I refer to his quadrennial appearance as a delegate in Republican National Conventions, where for a brief hour he enjoys the spotlight importance of a political supernumerary on the party stage. Since 1884, there has been an increasing inclination among Republican leaders to reduce the representation of the party's Southern wing in National Conventions to a number proportioned to the size of its vote on election day. But the leaders have not yet got their courage to the sticking point to tackle this proposition, perhaps because they have not been willing to tackle the prior one of a reduction of Southern representation in Congress, and perhaps for other good and sufficient considerations of an emergency character, they have allowed the matter to drift and to let for the time being well enough alone.

But whatever has been the motive of that party for its policy of inactivity and indecision on this question heretofore, there are not wanting signs of a change of that policy presently into one of activity and decision. It seems probable that reduction of representation of its Southern wing in its National Conventions will occupy a prominent place on the program of Republican reorganization within the next four years. That party in a half dozen Southern States has been called in derision by its enemies a "ghost party" and a "phantom party." And such it is in reality. It is dead and I do not believe that its corpse can ever be galvanized into life again. There are decomposing parts of it known as "Regulars" and "Lily Whites," stricken both with the microbes of death, obscenely alive with the maggots of place-hunters. It is powerless to dissolve the solid South and to restore to that section bi-party in place of one-party governments. It is wholly incapable of attracting Southern whites in sufficient numbers to raise it to the rank of a party of opposition, or to give to it the barest chance of achieving success at the polls. Its very name is a political bugaboo and makes it a party impossibility in those states. Since 1876, rather than utilize it as a party of opposition, the Southern whites have preserved their sectional solidity and one-party governments, notwithstanding the fact that many of their more enlightened and far seeing men have felt that such a course is bad for their section as it would be bad for any group of states,

North, East or West in the Union.

Just at this point let me refer in passing to sundry causes which are affecting adversely the Negro's status as a citizen, and are contributing by their collateral pressure to force him into a sort of political and industrial blind alley of our American civilization. The Southern propaganda against the Negro is advancing apace in the North by many dark and devious ways and by many subtle and potent means. Northern capital and enterprise, which are exploiting the South industrially, assimilate very readily the Southern view of the Negro, who must be kept at the bottom of the white man's labor system and civilization. Inter-marriage of Northern men and women with Southern men and women helps tremendously the propagation of the Southern view and solution of the race problem. The annual meeting and mingling at the National Capital in social intercourse of the wealth and fashion and leadership of both sections exerts a powerful influence in accenting points of agreement rather than points of difference between them. The feeling has risen throughout the North that the white people of the country can not afford either in terms of business or of politics to quarrel among themselves over the rights and wrongs of another race, which in consequence of the injustices and inequalities suffered by it at their hands, is being pushed brutally to the wall. The whites of both sections make themselves believe, as a sort of salve to their conscience, I suppose, that the Negro in their midst is an alien race, is a non-assimilable element in the body politic, whose ejection or isolation the health of that body and the race purity of the whites render necessary. Since ejection is impracticable as involving too huge a displacement of or amputation from the productive labor of the South, isolation remains the only alternative. The whites of course will do what they can without injuring themselves or corrupting their race ideals, or affronting their race prejudices to alleviate the inevitably hard lot of this unfortunate people. But in what may be done for them there must be a care not to mix with it any foolish sentiment of human liberty and brotherhood lest it give offense to the South and so interrupt the flow of that beautiful and brotherly affection which is increasingly making the Southern whites and the Northern whites one people in the bonds of an indissoluble friendship and union. Non-interference is the ominous word which has cast its dark spell over the



North and has turned its once warm and active sympathy into cold indifference and cruel apathy.

We had better look at the situation of the Negro in the United States to-day without blinking the facts, see it clear and see it straight. The present outlook for that race is gloomy and depressing, and this gloom and depression are nation-wide. Until the Negro gets in the South some measurable freedom in the use of the ballot, the present agencies at work for his advancement, like industrial and the higher education and the acquisition of property, and organized agitation in the North for his rights can do little to rescue him from the deep pit into which American race prejudice has pushed and penned him. The colored American child has a poorer chance to rise in the scale of being to-day than had the colored American child of a generation ago. He has a poorer chance in the South in spite of his increased educational opportunities and accomplishments, and he has a poorer chance in the North. For as the condition of the race grows worse and its citizenship deteriorates politically and civilly in the South, it will communicate to that part of it resident in the North something of its own sad lot, legal and industrial limitations and contracting prospects and opportunities. This is the inevitable fate of a ballotless race or class in an industrial democracy like ours. Such is the fate which awaits the American Negro unless he can manage to get the right to vote in the South. And this fate he can not escape so long as he remains a ballotless man--with no weapon of defense against the white man's race prejudice, which is regnant in his home and church and government and press and mills and shops and trades and schools. It is as impossible for the Negro to escape from his blind alley without the ballot as it is for some foolish fly, imprisoned on a window pane, to find its way to freedom through it. There is no escape for the fly until its restless activities discover the right direction, and, to change the figure, there is none for the Negro out of his slough of despond until he can lay hold of the ballot. Wanting the ballot no amount of education and wealth in the South and of agitation in the North will of themselves be able to make Southern Governments responsive to the needs and the rights of the Negro as laborer and citizen. But until they are made to respond to his claim for social justice and civil rights he will continue in the future as he is to-day the helpless victim of the peonage and convict lease systems, of the

plantation lease and credit systems, of contract labor and "Jim Crow" laws, of lynching and the inequitable distribution of the public school funds between the races. I can not repeat too often that such monstrous depression of a part of Southern labor is not less bad for the whites than it is for the blacks. Nothing else can possibly come of it in the future than has come of it in the past but evil to the South, arrested development and a backward civilization. For the whites cannot advance in law and order, in private and public morals, in wealth and in industrial intelligence and efficiency with the speed commensurate with their social and sectional opportunity if they persist in wasting so much of their individual and collective energies in keeping the Negro down at the bottom of their social and political fabric without regard to his merits and abilities.

Low water mark has been reached in the ebb tide of Negro citizenship in the South. Once upon a time, the race was represented in Congress, but today the tribe of the Negro Congressmen is extinct and has long been extinct. A few years ago it had its representatives on the Republican National Committee, but today the tribe of the Negro National Committeemen is extinct. The year 1912 may be memorable among other things for witnessing the last appearance as a power in Republican National Conventions of the Southern Negro delegate. The place which once knew him in those quadrennial gatherings of the Warwicks of the party will soon know him there no more forever. For,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God fulfils Himself in many ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Although the situation is depressing, it is far from hopeless, I think, since the rise of the new Progressive party. For that party will be able to do in the South what the Republican Party has proved itself incapable of doing, namely, of attracting to itself Southern white men in sufficient numbers to make of it a formidable party of opposition in Southern affairs. It will not encounter the ancient distrust, the inveterate hatred and contempt which the Republican Party arouses in those states, and which have paralyzed its usefulness and reduced it as a party of opposition to the zero point in Southern politics.

It is a notorious fact that the Southern whites as a class will not affiliate with any political organization on terms of equality with the blacks--that is, they may be educated to accept the Negro as a voter but nothing can induce them to accept him as a leader. White and black party following with white leadership is therefore the only feasible proposition, which stands any show of success as a party of opposition in that section under existing conditions. Such a proposition, the Republican Party is incapable of making for reasons already pointed out, and the Democratic Party for other and obvious reasons is precluded from offering. And yet if relief is ever to come to the Negro in the South, it must come to him by the way of an opposition party, which will put an end to the political solidity of that section by introducing into it bi-party in place of its one-party governments.

This, I take it, is the meaning of Colonel Roosevelt's action at Chicago last August relative to the representation of Southern colored men in the Bull Moose Convention, which launched the Progressive Party, and for which he was widely commended and as widely censured by white and colored people alike in all parts of the country. Some of the white people who commended his action did so undoubtedly in the belief that the leader of the new party gave thereby his approval to the Southern solution of the race problem. This group is made up, speaking generally, of Southern Bourbons and Northern Doughfaces. Their interpretation of the ex-President's action is a total misapprehension of his far seeing and statesmanlike purpose, and of the tremendous consequences for good which it holds for both races at the South, and for the people of the whole nation likewise--tremendous consequences for good which are as surely enfolded within the great man's purpose as the fertilizing principle is contained within the egg.

Many of those on the other hand, who censured him did so because, obsessed by their hate or dread of him, they failed to eliminate their imaginary tyrant or dictator, their fixed idea of the man from consideration of the immense value and far-seeing statesmanship of his act. To such men it was but another example of the brutal and colossal selfishness of the Third-Term Candidate. For did he not welcome to his Convention colored men as delegates from states where the colored vote counts, and reject certain other colored men as delegates from states where the colored vote

does not count? Now this view of Colonel Roosevelt's action seems to me to miss the mark quite as widely as did that of our Southern Bourbons and Northern Doughfaces.

That the founder of the new political party, as a practical man, should discriminate between colored men with a vote and colored men without a vote seems to me to be altogether natural, to grow, in fact, out of the necessities of every Democracy which is governed first by one party and then by another. That colored men with the ballot should be rated in terms of the political game higher than other colored men who have it not, violates no rule of business ethics. And politics is business, is the big business is it not, or ought it not to be the big business of all self governing peoples, who would maintain justice and freedom for themselves and transmit them unimpaired to their posterity? Colonel Roosevelt, as the leader of the new party, recognized at his full political value the Negro in states where his vote is counted, and perceived the very slight value, potential and actual, as a party asset of the Negro in states where his vote is not counted. He and the Progressive Party have not engaged in the big business of American politics for their health or amusement, but for the purpose of carrying forward to success great and far reaching measures of reform, which exclude from their benefits no race or class on account of color or sex but includes all American citizens, black and white alike. But to do this, to realize on their party promises and pledges to the people, they must have votes, not mere good will which can not translate itself into effective support on election day.

But the ex-President's action at Chicago goes deeper than this primal need of his party for votes. It reaches down to the springs of fundamental social and political changes at the South in relation to its race question, and sets in motion the healing waters of its pool of Bethesda, which will in time heal it of its sickness and cleanse it of its sins against law, justice and democracy. I do not mean to belittle in any way other agencies now at work on the solution of our terrible race problem, such as education or wealth or agitation. Not at all, for they are most important, but without the ballot they are impotent to give the relief so much needed in the South. There must be added to them this something else, this one thing needful to render them

effective to save the blacks from the evil consequences of their race ignorance, and the whites from the evil consequences of their race prejudice. And this one thing needful, I believe, the Progressive Party brings to the solution of the problem, and that it formed the underlying motive and the statesmanlike purpose of the action at Chicago last August of Theodore Roosevelt.

ARCHIBALD H. GRIMKE, 1415 CORCORAN STREET N. W.,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Transcriber's Notes:

The words "today" and "to-day" both appear in the original text.

The following misprints have been corrected: "othe" corrected to "other" (page 4) "blocd" corrected to "blood" (page 7) "oguht" corrected to "ought" (page 8) "attentive" corrected to "attentive" (page 12) "intercoure" corrected to "intercourse" (page 14) "vlctim" corrected to "victim" (page 15) "themselvas" corrected to "themselves" (page 17)

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