

An Appeal to Reason

An Open Letter to
JOHN TEMPLE GRAVES

BY

Kelly Miller

Howard University, Washington, D. C.

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An Appeal to Reason on the Race Problem

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KELLY MILLER

Howard University, Washington, D. C.

MR. JOHN TEMPLE GRAVES,
Atlanta, Georgia.

MY DEAR SIR:—

The world has read with horror of the Atlanta massacre and of the part you played during that awful hour. The outbreak is but the fruit of the seeds of race wrath which you and others have been assiduously sowing. They who sow the wind may expect to reap the whirlwind.

Your open appeal to the passion of the American people while this riot was yet at its height was fraught with evil suggestiveness. The fact that half the people of Atlanta were not slain is because other counsel than yours prevailed. The rabble is ever actuated by sinister influence. It obeys the acquiescent nod of secret understanding. There is a wireless communication between the baser elements of society and the cunning instigator who provokes them to wrath. Shakespeare with inimitable faithfulness has described the inner workings of this subtle and guilty control whereby the obsequious is prone to take the humor of the mighty for a warrant "to break within the bloody house of life" on the winking of authority.

After a wide scanning of the American press, yours is the only voice which I have heard, South or North, white or black, still breathing out hatred and slaughter amidst this awful carnival of blood. You alone occupy that "bad eminence." You break the unanimity of appeal to reason when wild passion had reached its whitest heat.

Your attitude contrasted with that of the foremost member of the afflicted race measures the whole diameter of difference be-

tween cruelty and mercy. While Negroes, innocent of any crime, were suffering torture which would cause even the bruised worm to turn, Booker T. Washington, with Christ-like forgiveness of spirit, counselled his people to resist not evil.

The natural impulse of one belonging to the victim race is to indulge in indignant and bitter words. It is almost impossible to repress this natural ebullition of feeling. When human nature is so flagrantly outraged, the very stones would cry out if men should hold their peace. It requires the highest self-repression and poise of spirit to refrain from verbal vehemence. But the voice of wisdom counsels only such expression as will tend to relieve rather than to intensify the strain of a critical situation.

I wish to utilize this grewsome occasion to discuss in an epistolary form some of the issues growing out of race relations in this country. I shall strive to be entirely courteous and considerate, and yet I shall abate no whit the fullest candor and plainness of statement demanded of one who speaks for the best interest of his people. Even an ambassador in bonds should speak with becoming boldness. There is a lamentable lack of expression which is at once candid and considerate, as respects the attitude of one race toward the other. We are prone to indulge in either wild, ungoverned onslaught, or diplomatic dissimulation and prudential concealment of real opinion and feeling. Honesty of utterance is usually accompanied with such ruthless and brutal frankness on the one hand, and resentful defiance on the other, as to render rational discussion impossible; while considerate temperament is too often given to indulgence in such fulsome flattery or unmanly yieldance, as to make wholesome discussion unprofitable. Several years ago I sat on the platform of a meeting in Atlanta composed of about equal numbers of the two races. If I mistake not, you were present on that occasion. Local representatives on both sides of the race line vied with each other in vowing racial affection and ties of endearment. Words could go no further in expressing friendly relationship. But as I sat there, I divined, as I thought, a hidden spirit not revealed in the spoken words, which seemed to me to be simply verbal civilities and diplomatic platitudes. When the meeting adjourned, each went to his own company with no surer knowledge of the real feeling or purpose of the other than when it convened.

Mr. Thomas Nelson Page has suggested in his recent book that the time has come for the best representatives of both races to meet together in conference on matters vitally concerning the common weal. It is needless to say that the value of such conference will depend upon the candor and frankness of spirit on both sides. The strained relation between the races calls for the

temper and spirit of the statesman which discards wild hysterics and the heated passion of the moment, and sanely safeguards the interests of all the people. We are confronted with a problem whose factors are as intricate and whose outcome is as far-reaching as any that has ever taxed human wisdom for solution.

I am addressing this letter to you not merely because of the leading part which you played in the recent eruption, but also because you stand for a policy and a propaganda whose fatuity it fully reveals. It is a dangerous thing to arouse the evil spirit. It will turn again and rend you. The recent Atlanta outbreak fully illustrates the folly of appealing to the baser passion, especially in a parti-colored community.

Have you stopped to consider the cause and outcome of Atlanta's shame? The State of Georgia had been lashed into fury for more than a year of bitter race discussion. The atmosphere was ominous and tense. The fuse was ready for the spark. There were assaults or rumors of assaults by black or blackened fiends, upon white women, in and around Atlanta. These were eagerly seized upon and exaggerated by an inflammatory press. They became the alarum and rallying cry about which the pent up wrath of race found vent. Red journalism ran rife. The terrorized imaginations saw a fiend incarnate in every darksome face. One paper, a little redder than the rest, boldly offered a reward for a lynching bee in the capital of the empire State of the South. The flaring head lines fanned the fire into a furious flame. The evil passion of a people always finds lodgment in the breasts of its basest members. The half-grown, half-drunk, half-savage descendants of Oglethorpe's colonists can no longer contain themselves. Like the Indian on the war path, they must have a savage yell. "Kill the Negro brutes" was the tocsin. They kill and beat and bruise Negroes on sight. The air is filled with ghoulish yells, mingled with the shrieks and groans of the mangled and dying. Although the hollow cry of virtue is ever on the lip, the mob has no more conception of a righteousness than a bloodhound set upon a scent cares about the guilt or innocence of his quarry. The aroused appetite for blood must be satiated. The police sprinkle the mob with the water hose; but they laugh at this complaisant impotency and joke with the mayor over the awful deeds of death, and cry out louder for blood. The Negroes are in seclusion; the liquor dens are closed; red head lines are suppressed in the local press. The fury of the mob ceases when it has nothing further to feed on. Twenty innocent Negroes are dead. The guilty escape amid the slaughter of the innocent. Not a single criminal has been touched. No evil propensity has been eradicated. As the spasm of delirium

relaxes the city's name stands tarnished before the world. The sin of it, the shame of it, will abide for many a day. The Negroes emerge bleeding and torn; the whites are dumfounded at the evil possibilities of their baser class. The race problem still remains unsolved and the remedy for evil unsuggested. No knot is untied in the tangled web. Such is the fatuity of your doctrine that the Negro must be controlled through the terror of the senses.

Atlanta may be regarded as the Athens of the South. It abounds in schools and colleges for both races. Here is the home of many of the most illustrious names in the South. Here lived the late Henry W. Grady, the oracle of the New South. Joel Chandler Harris and Clark Howell wield a journalistic and literary influence second to none of that section. Among the Negroes Atlanta is noted for its increasing class of cultivated and refined people. Bowen, DuBois and Crogman are men of light and leading, whose influence and power for good have gone out to all the land; and yet deliberate appeal to race passion may involve this community with so many influences of refinement and restraint, in riot and ruin in a single night.

While the Atlanta riot still raged, a hurricane was blowing up from the tropics which destroyed hundreds of lives and millions of property in several southern cities. But there was no blood guiltiness. These cities will bury their dead and rebuild their waste places and pursue their path of peace and progress, forgetful and unregretful of this disastrous touch of nature. But the stain of Atlanta will abide. Immigration and capital will shun a mob-ruled city as they would a place infected with pestilence and death. The evil passion of man is more to be dreaded than the terror of earthquake or storm.

You represent the ultra type of opinion and feeling which finds lodgment in the breast of the lower order of your own race. You would shut the Negro out from competition on the narrow and intolerant theory that there may not be enough "for you and us." Fearful that the tree of civilization is not big enough to bear fruit for all, you would deny the black man the God-given right to stretch forth his hand and partake of its fullness.

You are a disciple of Senator Tillman, who is the guide, philosopher and friend of those who worship at the shrine of racial narrowness and hate.

Mr. William Garrott Brown, a scion of the traditional South, tells us in his most interesting book on "The Lower South in American History" that "the triumph of the Tillmanites in South Carolina worked a change in the internal policies of that State deeper than the change in 1776 and 1860." When we study the deep significance of the Tillman movement, we find that these

words convey only the sober truth. The Tillman influence is by no means limited to his own State, but is equally potent in all parts of the South. The more cautious and considerate leaders have followed in his wake while they have not cared openly to acknowledge his regency. Rough, ready, quick-witted, of blunt and bitter speech, unschooled, unrestrained by traditional amenities, Benjamin R. Tillman has become the embodiment and expounder of the rule of the nether whites. In this scheme of government the Negro has no part or parcel, except to be ruled with a rod of iron. The erstwhile aristocratic class is accorded only such influence as they may gain by seeming to conform to the spirit of those whom they formerly regarded with scorn. The traditional society of the South was based upon belief in the Negro's complaisant subordination. The Tillman regime is based upon the fear that, after all, he might not be inferior. He is deprived of his rights lest he develop suspected power. Tillman openly proclaims that he intends to keep the serpent frozen. The Devils also believe and tremble. The shifting of the seat of power from the upper to the lower stratum marks indeed a momentous transformation. The Senate seats once held by Calhoun and Jefferson Davis, and later by Hampton and Lamar, are now occupied by Tillman and Vardaman.

Up to the time of Tillman's advent opposition to the aristocratic regime took the form of combining the cause of the poorer whites with that of the Negroes in bonds of political union. By this means, Mahone won in Virginia, Pritchard and Butler in North Carolina, while Cobb and Watson led their following to glorious, and as they claimed, fraudulent defeat, in Alabama and Georgia. Tillman was the first to pitch the poor whites against the Negro in fierce and bitter array. He understood the dynamic power of hatred. He won, and put an end to the aristocratic dynasty in the South. No longer does any faction form political alliance with the Negro. Wade Hampton threw out the olive branch, which was rejected. Now all factions vie with each other in denunciation of this race. Even the lily whites, a new variety of political exotics, which, like their botanical prototype, neither toil nor spin, but array themselves in the victory and spoils of office, have caught the contagion.

A *novus homo*, a Pharaoh, who knew not Joseph the black, is now on the throne. The novice statesmen who are now so frantic about white supremacy are experiencing the first delirium of power. Under the old regime they were rigorously excluded from political authority. They never owned a slave nor anything else. But now the old line aristocrats habituated to governmental control must obey the behests of their new and numerous al-

lies. They are forced to sacrifice both their statesmanlike breadth of view and traditional chivalric spirit. Mr. E. Gardner Murphy asks with affirmative, though solicitous intimation: "Is the organization of democracy in the South never to include the Negro?" Is he never to be a factor in the government and heir to a free and generous life." Senator Tillman answers with a bitter and defiant negative. He declares with vehement asseveration that the black man will ever be excluded from a participating part in the government under which he lives. Race outbreaks in the South are but the outgrowth of this feeling on the part of the half enlightened whites, but recently conscious of their political power, against the black man whom they regard as a natural rival and whom they hold in bitter despite. Rumors of assaults but furnish occasions and excuse for the exercise of this pent up feeling. They are no more the real cause than the last gust of wind which topples the mighty oak after the axman has plied his last stroke is the dynamic cause of its downfall. The volcanic eruption breaks through at the point where the mountain crust is thinnest.

Another excuse was found at Wilmington, N. C., where the race passion reached an atrocious climax a few years ago.

But there are two voices in the South to-day. While one preaches hatred and strife, another proclaims justice and humanity. The late Chancellor Hill, Bishop Galloway, Prof. John Spencer Bassett, Joel Chandler Harris and Wm. H. Fleming, and a host of others represent the ertswile silent South, which has remained tongue-tied under threat of political and social calamity. When the advocates of a more humane and tolerant doctrine first began to make themselves heard they were regarded as incendiaries, simpletons or harmless enthusiasts. George W. Cable was banished, Louis H. Blair ignored, J. L. M. Curry was listened to with courtesy, and Dr. Atticus G. Haygood was made a Bishop.

But of late this voice has become "something louder than before" and can no longer be ignored as an important, if not a controlling, factor in the Southern situation. The fundamental question to-day is which of these voices shall prevail. The voice of Tillman, which you loudly re-echo, or the voice of his vanquished adversary, whose dying whisper was "God bless all the people, white and black." The one breathing out hatred and slaughter, the other proclaiming peace and good will to all the people.

These two principles were exemplified in the Atlanta riot. It was the voice of cunning appealing to baser passion that provoked that shameful outbreak; but it was the firm, stern voice of higher quality and tone that restored peace and quiet. We are

told that there was no member of the aristocratic class in that miserable rabble; neither was there any member of the baser element in that deliberate and determined body, composed of the best representatives of both races, which brought order out of chaos. If there is any indication that Providence, in this instance, has overruled the wrath of man for good, it is to be found in the working understanding reached by these two races on the common platform of mutual welfare. For they must live and work and thrive and suffer together for all time, with which you and I are concerned, despite your eloquent and fiery demand for racial separation.

In your address before the University of Chicago, several years ago, you not only justified, but extolled the lynching of human beings. The punishment of Negroes for crimes committed against white persons furnishes the acutest phase of the race problem to-day. Lynching is apt to follow any serious offense against the person of a male member of the ruling race, and is sure to be inflicted where the complainant is of the other sex. The charge of rape is but one of the excuses for which the Negro suffers swift and summary vengeance. There is a growing understanding that the Negro must be lynched for offenses of certain nature and degree which is hedged about with as much nicety and exactness as the extinct code duello.

I am interrupted in the writing of this letter to read on a single page of my daily paper, accounts of four lynchings in different parts of the country. In only one instance is assault on woman alleged; and even in this case, there was no judicial determination of guilt. These are fair samples of the nature of the charges upon which Judge Lynch passes sentence upon the black culprit without trial.

"Rape means rope," says the sententious Sam Jones, and the moral sense of mankind approves the verdict. The only point of contention is whether this rope should be set apart by judicial sanction or extemporized by the blood-thirsty mob to appease ignoble race hatred.

There seems to be a deliberate propaganda on the part of those who appeal to the nether portion of the white South to place the colored race in evil repute so as to justify iniquitous practices. To make a race odious in the eyes of the world is ample excuse for all form of outrages and cruel treatment. Such is the sinister homage that cunning pays to conscience. It always seizes upon the most sacred instincts and passionate ideals as its palliating cloak. Russia would make believe that the Jews offer up Christian babes in their horrid sacrificial rites to justify the butchery of a meek and lowly race. The lamb below the wolf is

always charged with muddying the stream above him. Even among white men in the South, the dead man is usually the guilty man. This propaganda has skilfully and willfully exaggerated assaults by colored men so as to give this race an evil reputation. When all the facts in the case are calmly and carefully considered, due weight being given to all the contributing influences, it will be found that such offenses by Negroes are not greatly out of proportion to like offenses among white men. A careful student of current happenings informs me that he clipped from the newspapers fifteen cases of assaults by white men in one day in a single city. Where the Negro is involved it is the wide spread circulation that inflames the popular mind.

Assault by a Negro, actual or alleged, is displayed by the press in the boldest headlines, whereas like offenses by white men are compressed within a half inch space, as part of the ordinary happenings of the day. Whenever a Negro is accused of this crime the associated press sends the announcement all over the land. The morning papers proclaim it in bold headlines only to be outdone by their more reckless evening contemporaries. The weekly journals rehash the same with grewsome particularities, until the whole nation becomes inflamed against the race on account of the dastardly deed of a single wretch.

The Negroes of Atlanta, some forty thousand in number, who had hitherto sustained a good reputation for decency and order, were held up to the abhorrence of the whole civilized world by reason of two or three suspected criminals of their blood. This is flagrantly unjust to the Negro as it would be to base the reputation of the population of London upon the deeds of Jack the Ripper, or the good name of Englishmen upon the disclosures of William T. Stead. If cases of lightning stroke were proclaimed with such horrifying publicity as heinous crimes committed by Negroes, we should all live in momentary dread of the terror of the sky.

Your chief complaint is not due so much to the heinousness of the assault itself as to the fact that the perpetrators belong to one race and the victims to another. The abhorrence of the deed is intensified by the color and degree of the evil-doer. Shakespeare has painted Calaban and Miranda, the one hideous and depraved, the other fair and pure as the rose of the morning, to illustrate how difference in degree and rank of the offender and the victim adds grievousness to the foulest offense. A nameless assassin, sprung from the scum of the earth and nurtured in a murderous cult, extending his cowardly hand in simulated greetings, struck down William McKinley, the most amiable and beloved of our rulers. This wretch in human form, whose unpro-

nounceable name shall be anathema for evermore, aimed this deadly blow at the idol of the American people, and rolled a heavy stone on the nation's heart. Was ever deed more dastardly or calculated to excite summary vengeance? This was all but the universal impulse. And yet the anxious solicitude of our dying chieftain was that no harm should come to his assailant, not sanctioned by due process of law. Summary vengeance wreaked upon the vilest miscreant answers no worthy end. It neither wipes out the crime committed, nor prevents its repetition. A bitter and bloody experience shows too plainly that vindictive vengeance acts as a suggestive rather than a deterrent to the evilly disposed.

The prevalence of lynching in the South causes a double reaction of feeling. In the first place it causes the whites to hate the Negro, as it is a part of human nature to hate those whom we have injured. In the second place it causes the Negro to hate the whites. It is universally conceded that lynching has no deterrent effect upon the class of crimes alleged to excite its vengeance. On the contrary, it probably has the opposite effect. The criminals and outlaws of the Negro race, who care nothing for life or death, may be thus hardened into resolves of revenge, and lie waiting to strike the hated race where the blow will be most keenly felt.

You ask the Northern press to join in the work of blackening the name of the race by giving two paragraphs to every alleged assault and but scant notice to lynching. You would make it appear that "Negro," "rape" and "lynch" are connotative terms. But you seem to forget, or purposely ignore the fact that the direst vengeance is often afflicted for other than rapeful assault. In Statesboro, a remote village of your own State, two colored men, intent on robbery, murdered a whole family and set fire to the dwelling to hide their awful deed. The accused were apprehended and sentenced to death within two months after the horrible performance. Race passion ran high. Threats and rumors of lynching flew thick and fast. The bloodthirsty mob vowed summary vengeance. The Governor dispatched State troops to quell the turbulent spirit and vindicate the majesty of the law. But the mob had scented blood and was not to be foiled of its prey by an empty show of force. It snatched the prisoner from the hands of the law, mocked the trial judge, ignored the sheriff, and overpowered the militia which, like tin soldiers, yielded without inflicting or receiving a wound. Cries of crucifixion filled the air. The sovereign State of Georgia lay prostrate under the feet of the maddened mob, infuriated at the aroused instinct of blood. The culprits are dragged tremblingly through the streets,

their bodies saturated with oil, and chained to a decaying tree trunk. The inflammable fagots are piled high, the torch is applied while men, women and children dance with ghoulish glee at the death groans issuing from the flames. In another instance a woman was burnt alive on a grewsome funeral pyre. Such fiendish procedure outrages human nature and hurts the heart of the world.

All of this you would palliate and excuse and ask the Northern press to pass over with a scant and hasty paragraph.

I am disposed to hope that you will not be indifferent to the wrongs and injustice inflicted upon a helpless, and, on the whole, rightly inclined people.

The woes and miseries of the Negro race are made to culminate upon the subject of crime and its summary punishment. The black man's political rights, civil privileges, educational opportunities and the advantage of sympathetic and helpful contact with the white race will be conditioned upon the evil reputation foisted upon him by mob violence, inflicted on account of alleged execrable crimes. No people will tolerate a race of potential rapists in their midst. If this lecherous brand can be fixed upon the Negro's forehead, it will be more loathsome than the murderous mark of Cain. The race would be shunned as a colony of moral lepers. No individual of this blood, however upright his personal life, could escape the taint of racial reputation.

This propaganda of evil has so far succeeded as to cool the ardor of those who are disposed to defend the Negro's cause. There is scarcely a single voice in all this land that dares, with undisguised boldness to defend the rights of human nature for fear of the reproach of encouraging an unworthy people. There has been a sharp change in public sentiment during the last quarter century, which marks the period during which the Negro's alleged evil propensities have been proclaimed to the world with shrewd and unholy design. In 1881 Dr. Atticus G. Haygood, a courtly, pious son of Georgia, wrote a book and styled it "Our Brother in Black." Twenty years later we were startled at the title, "The Negro a Beast." These contrasted titles fairly gauge the drift of sentiment during that interval. So powerful for evil has been the attempt to convince the world that the black man is imbued with a low and evil nature. So despiteful has become the estimate in which the Negro is held, that at the slightest charge against him, the cry: "Lynch the Negro!" leaps spontaneously from the lips of the gathering multitude in the streets of our most populous and peaceful cities. We are so accustomed to the startling headlines in the daily press: "Negro lynched," or "Negro Burned at the stake," that the whole American people would be-

come one national nervous wreck, were it not that frequently repeated shocks of the same nature render the system insensible to further impressions. There is danger that the national feeling will become numb and the national conscience sear. Clippings from the columns of any leading daily on this subject for the past three months would be sufficient to form a mammoth Sunday edition, with a blood red supplement of atrocious horrors. The intelligent Negro bears heavily the brunt of this load. The sins of his race, actual and alleged, weigh heavily upon him. Almost every reflecting Negro of my acquaintance is growing prematurely gray.

The Negro complains because of the insistent statement that lynching is resorted to only as punishment for rape, when the plain facts of record show that not more than one case in four can plead the allegation of rape in extenuation. The causes run the whole gamut of offenses, from the most serious crimes to the most trifling misdemeanors. Indeed, lynching is coming to be looked upon as the proper mode of punishment for any offense which the Negro commits against a white person; and yet every time a Negro is lynched or burned at the stake, the race is held up to the world as responsible for the execrable crimes.

Mr. George P. Upton, associate editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, has kept records of lynchings in the United States, in itemized form, since 1885. The accuracy of his figures has never been questioned. The following facts are taken from an article contributed by him to the *Independent*, September 29th, 1904:

Between 1885 and 1904, there were 2,875 lynchings in the United States. Of these 2,885, 2,499 were attributed to the South, 302 to the West, 63 to the Pacific Slope, and 11 to the East. The alleged causes were as follows:

For alleged and attempted criminal assault	564
For complicity and for the double charge of assault and murder	138
For murder	1277
For theft, burglary and robbery	326
For arson	106
For race prejudice	94
For unknown reason	134
For simple assault	18
For insulting whites	18
For making threats	16

The remaining cases were inflicted for such offenses as "Slander, miscegenation, informing, drunkenness, fraud, voodooism, violation of contract, resisting arrest, elopement, train wrecking,

poisoning stock, refusing to give evidence, political animosity, disobedience of quarantine regulations, passing counterfeit money, introducing smallpox, concealing criminals, cutting levees, kidnapping, gambling, riots, testifying against whites, seduction, incest, and forcing a child to steal." The causes include well nigh every offense in the catalog of human transgression.

In view of these undisputed facts, can you, with clear conscience, continue to mislead the world into the belief that the Negro is lynched only for "the usual crime?" If words are used in their usual sense, the "usual crime" for which Negroes are lynched would be other than assault on women.

Again, the Negro suffers injustice in that the mildest protest against such red handed procedure is construed in sympathy for criminals and condonation of crime of the most abominable nature. The Negro race is the gainer by every miscreant who meets his merited doom at the end of a rope. Nor is it particularly concerned as to the manner of his death, nor "the deep damnation of his taking off." If swift, summary vengeance followed as personal punishment for personal transgression, no Negro, as such, would open his lips, albeit he might plead for law and order on the broad basis of humanity. But the vengeance of the mob is not confined to the guilty if indeed it is aimed at him. Its leading purpose, as you advise, is to strike terror in the whole Negro population. To this end there is little pains to identify the victim or to establish his guilt. The innocent and the guilty are alike objects of its vengeance. Governor Candler of Georgia, stated in a public utterance some years ago: "I can say of a verity that I have, within the last month, saved the lives of half a dozen innocent Negroes, who were pursued by the mob and brought them to trial in a court of law in which they were acquitted." The mob has neither the temper nor the disposition to carefully determine the guilt of the accused. We must not place too much reliance upon the alleged identification of the culprit by the delirious victim, nor upon alleged confession of guilt wrung from the accused by indescribable torture. Although the newspapers glibly tell us of the confession, the courts have never yet been able to determine the identity of the confessor. In many cases it is known that innocent men have suffered death and torture at the hands of the mob. Of the 2,000 Negro victims of violence, who can tell how many guiltless souls have been hurled into eternity, with the protestation of innocence on their lips. But the innocent equally with the guilty serve to impair the Negro's good name. Several years ago, the whole Italian nation was aroused at the lynching of a dozen of its subjects in Louisiana. It was not because of sympathy for or regret at the loss of a few

worthless individuals, but because such high handed procedure served to insult, humiliate and degrade the entire race and nation to which the unfortunate victims belonged. It is for such reason that the Negro pleads for the supremacy of law, and not because he has any sympathy for a crime that always excites the wildest passions of human nature.

It is not denied that depraved and vicious Negroes, as of other races, do at times commit these heinous crimes; but it cannot be said that sexual infirmity is an especial failing of the colored race. It is well known that rapeful assault has always been, and is still, a more or less common practice among all races and peoples. Students of the Bible know full well that this practice was not unknown among the Hebrews. Jupiter, father of gods and men, who embodied the vices as well as the virtues of the Greek race, to his numerous epithets might properly have added the cognomen, "ravisher of women." The practice is quite common among all European races to-day. England and Wales, in 1887, furnished 878 prisoners convicted on this charge. From 1871 to 1880 there were in the same country 758 persons convicted for assaults upon girls under 13 years of age. The 11th census returns 814 white prisoners in the United States convicted on the charge of rape. And yet to listen to your scathing denunciations of the black man, one would be led to believe that a crime as old as human frailty was invented by the American Negro, as a new mode of human atrocity.

We must not overlook the fact that where a colored man and white women are concerned, rape has a larger definition than is set down in the dictionaries. Relations are often punished under this head which, if sustained among members of the same race, would receive a less abominable, though perhaps an equally unhallowed name.

There are certain delicate phases of question whose discussion the seriousness of the situation alone justifies. The womanhood of the Negro race has been the immemorial victim of the white man's lasciviousness and lust. The black woman has yielded to higher authority and superior guile. A lower will is overborne by a higher as easily as a weaker by a stronger physical force. While breathing out slaughter against the Negro man, does the white Lord and master ever stop and reflect upon the unnumbered assaults which he for centuries has made upon black and bleached womanhood? The Negro domestic who must fight daily to preserve her integrity from the subtle guile or forceful compulsion of her white employer, and who yields only when her strength of body or will is not sufficient to hold out longer, is a victim who commands the deepest sympathy. While the white

man is beholding the mote in his black brother's eye, he should not fail to consider the beam which is within his own. This point cannot be better enforced than by the lines of the poet Burns:

“You see your state wi' theirs compared,
 And shudder at the niffer;
 But cast a moment's fair regard,
 What makes the mighty differ:
 Discount what scant occasion gave,
 That purity ye pride in,
 And (what's oft mair than a' the lave),
 Your better art o' hidin'.”

In the refutation of the charge brought against him, the Negro is entitled to every argument that can be brought forward in his behalf.

1. In Africa, the fatherland, or rather the motherland, of this race, rape is almost unknown, and when it does occur, is visited with the severest punishment.

2. We have heard nothing of this abnormal tendency during the days of slavery. When the care and safety of white women of the South were entrusted to the keeping of slaves they returned inviolate all that had been entrusted to them.

3. Some are so careless with facts and reason as to attribute this alleged tendency to the last two amendments of the Federal constitution. They seem to forget that during the days of reconstruction, when these amendments were in force, such charges were never preferred. It cannot be then, as you affirm, due to the outgrowth of the spirit of equality on the part of the Negro.

4. Of the hundreds of lady missionaries from the North who have and do still entrust their safety to the colored race, not a single case of violation, up to this last day of Christian grace, has been reported to their friends in the North.

5. In South America and the West Indian archipelago, where the Negroes live in largest numbers, this has never become a subject of popular agitation.

What evil spirit then has come upon the present day Afro-American that a people, who, from the days of Homer until this generation have borne the epithet of “blarless Ethiopians,” should now be accused as the scourge of mankind? Why has this demoniacal possession held itself in restraint until now, and why does it not manifest itself in peoples of like blood in different parts of the globe?

The self-respecting Negro is upbraided because he does not exercise a restraining influence over the vicious and criminal members of his own race. As a matter of fact, he has little or no contact or control over them. He is sought to be made his broth-

er's keeper with no coercive or corrective influence over his brother's conduct. Responsibility implies authority. The Negro is rigorously excluded from governmental power and divested of every semblance of official prerogative. The depraved and criminal Negroes, as of other races, do not go to school, they belong to no church or fraternal order, they are no more influenced by moral agencies than if they were located on another continent. All attempt to interfere on the part of his self-respecting brother would lead to the ancient response, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" Those who occupy places of governmental authority and power are responsible to the world for the punishment of the guilty, and protection of the innocent. Moral suasion has little or no influence with hardened criminals—they are answerable to the law alone. The white race clothed with full authority and power, is confessedly unable to restrain its own vicious classes. It is an extravagant compliment to the Negro to expect him to do by moral suasion alone that which the white man cannot accomplish with moral suasion backed by public power.

The stockades and chain gangs maintained by the State of Georgia are training schools of crime. Those who enter must leave all hope behind. They are hardened into hatred of society. Have you ever stopped to think that the State may be responsible for the criminal class which you so loudly reprobate?

The Negroes are charged with shielding criminals of their own race. In so far as this charge may have the semblance of truth, is due to the fact that the black culprit, guilty or innocent, is likely to meet with mob violence, and to assist in the apprehension of the accused is equivalent to joining in a man hunt for blood. Whenever a Negro is pursued by a posse, charged with a serious offense against a white person, the newspaper headlines usually foreshadow his doom with unerring accuracy: "Will be lynched if caught." The conscientious citizen of the North a generation ago refused to aid the man hunter in quest of run-aways from a cruel bondage, although he was clothed with full authority by an iniquitous law. Every good citizen will uphold and defend the authority and dignity of the law, but he will not aid the mob in quest of vengeance upon a man of unproved guilt.

You did not restrain that Atlanta mob of murderers, and yet you censured the Negroes of that city for not suppressing a few suspected criminals, whom even the microscopic eye of the law could not detect.

The Negro feels that he cannot expect justice from Southern courts where white and black are involved. In his mind, accusation is equivalent to condemnation. For this suspicion the jury

rather than the judge is responsible. The very spirit in which, he feels, the law is administered makes it difficult for the colored citizen to exercise cheerful co-operation and acquiescence.

I think I ought to say that after diligent inquiry from colored men in all parts of the South, I am advised that Southern courts are usually fair and often generous to the Negro in cases which do not involve race feeling, but where this issue arises the outcome, in the Negro's mind, is a foregone conclusion. Herein lies the greatest condemnation of existing rule. It fails to make the humble citizen feel safe and secure under the protecting aegis of the law.

In the British Indies, where there is a race situation more complicated than in America, we are told, that the behavior toward the whites is exemplary, and the type of crime so bitterly deplored in this country, is unknown. This desirable state of things is due, in my judgment, to the fact that the British government administers justice with absolute equality as between man and man, without regard to race. Where the Negro sees the white man made amenable to the requirements of the law, he is apt to regard it with reverence and respect. On the contrary, in the South a white man is rarely punished for offense against his black brother. Of the thousands of cases of murder of blacks by whites since emancipation, there have been scarcely a legal execution, and comparatively few prison sentences. The offender usually escapes with the stereotyped verdict: "Justifiable homicide," or at best with a nominal fine. If the relations were reversed, whatever the provocative circumstances, the Negro would almost certainly be sentenced to death or to life imprisonment, if indeed the mob allowed the case to reach a judicial hearing. To say that these flagrant discrepancies have not their influence upon the black man's attitude toward the law, would be to deny that he is controlled by ordinary human motives. The best example that the South can set for the Negro would be punishment of white men for their crimes according to the requirement of the law. Mean white men will continue to mistreat Negroes just so long as they can do so with impunity by hiding themselves behind the cloak of racial arrogance. Mobs will continue to wreak their wrath on Negro culprits, innocent or guilty, until they are deterred by effective bayonets and bullets, at the hands of a firm and unrelenting law. When the Negro sees that the white man can override the law with impunity it begets in him the spirit of desperation, vindictiveness and reprisal. This is the elemental law of human passion. It is firmly lodged in the breast of the ignorant and untutored. The intelligent Negro will be restrained by reason and prudence, but the depraved and the base will follow his wild, un-

tutored human impulse. Good policy requires the placing of the stress of emphasis upon the white offender as upon the black wrong-doer. Judgment in this instance should begin at the house of God. The Negro will follow the pace set by the white man. Reverence and respect for law and order on his part will beget like sentiment in his black brother. Equality before the law is the South's only salvation.

The Negro is by no means the only sufferer from these outrageous practices—the white people are also victims of their own wrath. According to the law of retribution, the perpetrators of wrong must suffer equally with the victims of it. The spirit of violence and lawlessness permeates the atmosphere and is breathed in every breath of air. It has been claimed that the Spanish incurred their blood-thirsty disposition by their fierce struggle in subduing the Moors. The acquired disposition passed into heredity and became a permanent trait of the race.

Is the white South not in danger of such a fate? Sometime ago Rev. Sam Jones, with a self gratulatory spirit, claimed that not one Southerner in ten had ever participated in a lynching. Supposing that these figures approximate the truth. It will be seen that more persons have been engaged in lynching Negroes than there were soldiers in the Confederate army. Every such person has blood on his conscience which cannot be washed away by high sounding declamation about Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

“Nor florid prose, nor honeyed lies of rhyme
Can blazon evil deeds or consecrate a crime.”

The evil has reached such alarming proportions as to become of national importance. While lynching is confined mainly to the South, it is not wholly so. Negroes have been lynched in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Colorado, and even in bleeding Kansas, the State of brave old John Brown, whose soul must for once have halted in its onward march at such dreadful news. The “ape and tiger” slumber all too slightly beneath the thin veil of civilization whose chief concern is to keep them subdued under the beneficent sway of reason and law. If they are allowed to break forth and rave at will in the State of Georgia, will not this savage triumph embolden like spirit throughout the land? Does not the unrestrained fury of a wild animal that escapes from a menagerie encourage his engaged fellows to break forth, too, and vent their pent up rage. There is no contagion so swift and sure of diffusion as the baser passion of man. The nation puts forth a strenuous endeavor to stamp out cholera or yellow fever, however remote the plague spot where it first breaks forth. The baleful effect of the burning and lynching of human beings cannot be lim-

ited to any locality, State or section, but is as wide spread as the nation whose dormant evil passion it tends to encourage, and whose good name it serves to tarnish. The question is truly a national one, and as such should appeal to every man, woman and child who loves his country, and is pledged to uphold its good name and high ideals.

The infectuous germ has inoculated almost every State in the Union. The list for States and territories, from 1885 to 1904, is as follows:

Mississippi.....	298	Indiana.....	38
Texas.....	272	Kansas.....	38
Louisiana.....	261	California.....	33
Georgia.....	253	Nebraska.....	33
Alabama.....	232	Michigan.....	6
Arkansas.....	207	North Dakota.....	5
Tennessee.....	191	Nevada.....	5
Kentucky.....	148	Minnesota.....	4
Florida.....	128	Wisconsin.....	4
South Carolina.....	100	Wyoming.....	33
Virginia.....	84	Colorado.....	31
Missouri.....	79	Montana.....	29
North Carolina.....	58	Idaho.....	21
Indian Territory.....	54	Illinois.....	19
West Virginia.....	43	Washington.....	16
Oklahoma.....	38	Ohio.....	13
Maryland.....	20	Iowa.....	12
Arizona.....	18	South Dakota.....	11
New Mexico.....	15	Oregon.....	10
		Alaska.....	4
		Maine.....	3
		Pennsylvania.....	3
		New York.....	2
		New Jersey.....	1
		Connecticut.....	1
		Delaware.....	1
		Massachusetts.....	0
		New Hampshire.....	0
		Vermont.....	0
		Rhode Island.....	0
		Utah.....	0

Total for South.... 2,499

Total for North.... 376

Total for Nation..... 2,875

You proclaim the doctrine of State sovereignty and reprobate federal interference. But every man lynched or burned in the South furnishes the nation an invitation to step in and vindicate the national honor.

What a blot upon our civilization these figures disclose to the foreigner who may still be skeptical as to the boasts of our free institutions? What will Russia and Turkey and Cuba say? How long will Theodore Roosevelt, bent on setting the world to rights, keep his hands off?

A large majority of these victims are of the colored race, but a goodly proportion of them are white men. The evil practice cannot be limited to any race or section. A distinguished citizen of Georgia, during the heated anti-slavery discussion, boasted that he would yet call the roll of his slaves under the shadow of Bunker Hill Monument. His boasted prediction would doubtless have been fulfilled had not the institution of slavery been destroyed altogether. Unless the American people stamp out lynching its baleful influence will become as widespread as the national domain. Either the law must destroy lynching or lynching will destroy the law, involving the whole nation in anarchy and red ruin.

You appeal to the North to help separate the races. In this you are speaking in an unknown tongue. The absurdity of the suggestion places it beyond the sphere of practical discussion. I may agree with you that if the Negroes were removed from the South, whether sent to Africa or to some hotter place, there would be no Negro problem left, as such; but I am by no means certain that an equally serious human problem would not spring up in its place. If you should advocate transporting ten million Negroes to the moon, your language would be equally intelligible. Even if the races were separated by interstellar space, it would last only until some enterprising white man contrived some means of communication. Three hundred years ago the races were absolutely separated. The Negro basked in the sunshine of savage bliss, and was happy, but the white man sought him amid his "sunny clime and palmy wine" and dragged him to the western world. Since then he has become an inseparable part of the two continents, and of the adjacent archipelagos. There are more Negroes in the western world than members of any other race. He is rooted and grounded in the soil; he is here to stay; he is in the South to stay; we need a brand of statesmanship which will adjust itself to this great determining fact.

I beg to suggest that in dealing with the Southern situation you look upon the task as a race problem, rather than as a human problem. The human aspect is ignored and the racial feature

over emphasized. We have before us a dual problem of the perfectibility of the people, and of racial peace and harmony.

The South is freighted with an awful load of ignorance and poverty, and resultant degradation. Much of this attaches to the white race, but more to the Negro. There are no nostrums or miracles that will roll away this reproach. It requires the united effort of all the nation to enlighten, upbuild and adjust these neglected people. A wise and far-seeing statesmanship would not seek to isolate and perpetuate these incapacities in one race, but would banish them entirely. Unless ignorance and poverty are destroyed, they will rise up ever and anon to perplex and to trouble. Ignorance and vice are not racial attributes; knowledge and virtue are not racial endowment; they are the outcome of condition. Crime has no color; the criminal no race, but is the common enemy of society. He should be isolated and dealt with according to the desert of his evil deed. It is folly to punish a race for the wrong doings of an individual. The enlightened elements of both races should make common cause with knowledge against ignorance, with virtue against vice, and with law against the lawless.

I must not close this letter without expressing the firm conviction that Negroes of light and leading have grave and serious responsibility. Their race is the victim in every conflict. While they cannot restrain the hardened criminal without governmental authority, yet they are in duty bound to put forth strenuous efforts to reach and to influence for good the weak, the helpless and neglected elements of their own race, and to keep them from falling into evil ways. There is that subtle, sympathy of race which renders individuals more easily amenable to the moral control of those of their own blood. The Negro school teacher and minister of the gospel stand in the high place of moral authority. They should utilize all the power which they are permitted to wield, and by example, precept and persuasion sustain their weaker brethren in all right directions. They must bridge over the widening chasm between the educated and the more unfortunate by a practical sympathy and a more vital and brotherly touch. In this great work of human development we ask and should receive the hearty good will and co-operation of all those who believe in the perfectibility of man. The Negro is impressionable and responsive to kind treatment. If given the necessary encouragement he will become a safe, conservative factor, and not economic or moral menace which you so vociferously proclaim him to be. It will not be necessary to ruthlessly override all human and divine order at the behest of the narrow racial arrogance. All far-seeing and conservative Americans believe

that in the final outcome, peace and good will, friendship and amity will prevail, and that: "Ephriam shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephriam."

Mr. Harry Stillman Edwards, your distinguished fellow Georgian, in a recent article contributed to the Century Magazine, expresses the hopeful belief that the two races can live together in righteous peace. These are his words: "Neither can settle the questions involved in their lives, but both may, and despite political riders, I believe both will. I must either believe this or prepare my descendants for anarchy."

Compared with your doctrine of dread and terror, subversive of established order and public peace, few patriotic Americans will fail to feel that Mr. Edwards has chosen the better part.

Yours truly,

KELLY MILLER.

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