

RACE RELATIONS.

"Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

John 4:9.

The race question is growing more explosive and more grave each day. Shutting our eyes to the truth or hiding our faces from unpleasant prospects will not help us. The best solution to any problem is found in a free and open discussion. Even when a man is wrong he will find it out sooner if he is allowed to express his own opinion than he will when he is forced to keep his mouth shut.

When Jesus talked to the woman at Jacob's well He walked square across two of the rock-ribbed prejudices of His own people. She was a woman and she was a Samaritan. As a woman she was barred from discussion of such subjects as eternal life. Just why a woman should not be interested in such subjects is not told. But it was forbidden. As a Samaritan she was hated by the Jews. This hatred was based on wrongs done many, many years back. But the hatred lived on. Jesus would have no part in it. Some of the rock-ribbed prejudices of our own times may look as foolish to posterity as these two do to us today.

In one of our large cities the Catholic children were forbidden to play with the Jewish children. The reason was "They killed Jesus". The Jewish children, being in the minority, were deeply hurt by the slight. They said pleadingly, "We know we didn't kill Jesus. It must have been the people next door."

A hundred million innocent little faces are looking into ours across the cruel lines that separate the races and saying, "We don't know who offended you. But we didn't do it. It must have been the people next door."

It is not alone in the South that wrongs have been done a minority race. Recently an Indian soldier who died bravely fighting for his country was refused burial in an Iowa cemetery because he was not a member of the Caucasian race. Jesus Christ would have been barred from burial in ^{that} the cemetery. It is to the everlasting credit of President Truman that he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with our illustrious dead. This is just one glaring instance of the complicated nature of the race question. We build a fence to keep out certain undesirables. To our utter confusion we learn that the worst of the lot have climbed over or crawled under the fence. Then, with red faces, we learn that the fence has deeply hurt some one we did not want to offend.

Recently a Northern newspaper man who had secured a deep tan on the sea shore made a tour of the South, passing as a Negro, and wrote a lengthy article on the race question in the South. Any Southern man who read the article could see that it was written by a man who was not familiar with race problems in the South. No honest man can deny that many cruel wrongs have been done the Negro in the South. But many Southern white people have opposed these wrongs as strongly and found themselves as helpless in preventing them as the Negroes themselves are. This man pictures the Southern Negro as a craven, oppressed and cowed individual. He surely had not read the papers published in the South by Negro editors or attended any Negro meetings in the big Negro schools and colleges in the South. It is plain that this man

took the genuine politeness of the Southern Negro for fear. He did not know that when a Southern Negro tips his hat to a white man he is probably breaking the ground for a loan or some other favor. He did express surprise to learn that the Negroes in the South do not hate the white people. There is one other fact, just as important, that he failed to learn. The white people in the South do not hate the Negroes.

Why is it that the Negroes and the white people in the South are not divided by bitter hatred such as is found in many enlightened lands in Europe and Asia? I have lived in the South all my life. I have seen the best and the worst of both white and black. I do not see how any Southern white man who is not a "roughneck" can hate a Negro. The Southern Negro is the most gentle and refined primitive race on earth today. When statistics show that there are more college graduates among the Southern Negroes to the population than there are in England, it is questionable whether the race can any longer be called primitive. When ^{two} races as far apart racially and socially as the Negroes and whites in the South live next door to each other in peace and harmony for almost a century, you may depend on the fact, there has been some giving and taking by both races. It would be absurd for either race to claim all the credit for the goodwill that surely exists.

Years ago a rich woman of Tuskegee found that all her men folks had gone off and left her without any wood cut to cook with. I suppose rich men dread this chore as much as poor men do. One wit in our community when I was a boy said he wanted ^{his people} to write on his tombstone, "DONE CUTTIN' STOVE WOOD." Mrs. V. saw a Negro man passing her house and ran to the door and asked him

to come into her back yard and cut her some wood to cook with. All the Negroes in Tuskegee knew Mrs.V. and would have been glad to do her a favor. They were always well paid for it. The Negro man tipped his hat politely, took off his coat, and went for the wood pile. But when Mrs.V. went to pay him she found the wood stacked in a neat pile, but the Negro man was gone. Her face was pretty red when one of her neighbors told her that Booker T.Washington had cut her wood for her. She called him up and apologized for asking him to do such a menial task. He told her she did not owe him any apology. He said he was glad to do favors for his friends and hoped she would ask him to help her again sometimes. It is doubtful if any one ever received any more for cutting a little wood. She was Booker T.Washington's friend to the end of their lives.

Such courtesies by members of both races have cemented a friendship between the races that the Communists have not been able to breach, though they have done every thing in their power to break it. One reason for the failure is ~~the~~ ^{that} the Negro in the South sincerely desires the friendship of the white man. He feels insecure, has felt insecure since the day he received his freedom. He knows the Southern white man will help him when he needs help. He is suspicious of the Communist who tells him the white man is his enemy.

But the economic status of the Negro is rapidly changing. How will he feel when he is economically secure? Any white man who thinks the Negroes are the same people they were a quarter of a century ago, is going to wake up some morning as surprised as Rip Van Winkle was when he found George Washington's picture where King George's was when he went to sleep. Any one

10

who thinks we can go on denying the Negroes the use of rest rooms, pullman cars, hotels and restaurants surely has not given the question much sober thought.

When the Supreme Court ruled that public schools for Negroes must be equal to those for whites and that Negro teachers must be paid the same for like scholastic grades there was but little protest from Southern white people. But our critics seem to forget that the Negroes have lots of children and very little money. They forget that the Southern white man's child already has a school far below the national standard. They do not realize that it takes far greater sacrifice for the white man to live next door to Negroes than it does for the Negro to live next door to white people. The white man must accept a lower standard of living and a lower standard of education for his children because of the Negro. If he has sometimes been impatient in making these sacrifices, it is only human that he would. While the white man is making these sacrifices the Negro profited immensely by his association with the white man. The standards of living among Southern Negroes is probably the highest of any colored race on earth.

The Supreme Court has now ruled that Segregation is Discrimination. No one can truthfully deny that it is. For nearly a century the good people of the South have hoped that some form of Segregation could be applied that would not hurt the Negro. Segregation, any kind of Segregation, is bound to hurt the person that is Segregated. It hurts physically, it hurts economically, it hurts spiritually. When the Negro was bowed down in ignorance, brutalized by

11

two centuries of slavery, and still in economic servitude he probably felt it least. But the more enlightened a race becomes the more galling such a decree becomes. Can the two races be separated without a cruel decree that makes one inferior? Is "separate, but equal rights" a fallacy, a dream that can never be realized? These questions must be answered soon. They cannot now be answered ⁱⁿ the old spirit of "White supremacy". They must be answered with justice and fairness to all.

It is foolish for demagogues to argue that God is the Author of Segregation. If God segregated the races, gave each his home, the white man mixed them up. It was the white man who brought the Negro to America. Now the white man has taken the best of the land in Africa and driven the Negro back into reservations too unhealthy to be desirable. It seems that God's lines of segregation mean but little when the white man wants something for himself.