



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis Vol. 13 No. 4

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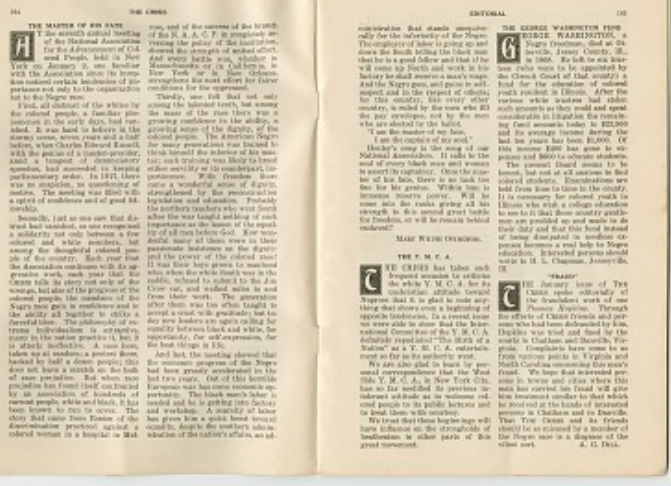
THE MASTER OF HIS FATE

At the seventh annual meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, held in New York on January 2, one familiar with the Association since its inception noticed certain tendencies of importance not only to the organization but to the Negro race.

First, all distrust of the whites by the colored people, a familiar phenomenon in the early days, had vanished. It was hard to believe in the stormy scene, seven years and a half before, when Charles Edward Russell, with the genius of a master-presider, amid a tempest of denunciatory speeches, had succeed in keeping parliamentary order. In 1917, there was no suspicion, no questioning of motive. The meeting was filled with a spirit of confidence and of good fellowship.

Secondly, just as one saw that distrust had vanished, so one recognized a solidarity not only between a few colored and white members, but among the thoughtful colored people of the country. Each year that the Association continues with its aggressive work, each year that the CRISIS tells its story not only of the wrongs, but also of the progress of the colored people, the members of the Negro race gain in confidence and in the ability all together to strike a forceful blow. The philosophy of extreme individualism is attractive, many in the nation practice it, but it is utterly ineffective. A case here, taken up at random; a protest there, backed by half a dozen people; this does not leave a scratch on the bulk of race prejudice. But when race prejudice has found itself confronted by an association of hundreds of earnest people, white and black, it has been known to run to cover. The story that came from Boston of the discrimination practiced against a colored woman in a hospital in Melrose, and of the success of the branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in completely reversing the policy of the institution, showed the strength of united effort. And every battle won, whether in Massachusetts or in California, in New York or in New Orleans, strengthens the next effort for fairer conditions for the oppressed. Thirdly, one felt that not only among the talented tenth, but among the mass of the race there was a growing confidence in the ability, a growing sense of the dignity, of the colored people. The American Negro for many generations was trained to think himself the inferior of his master; such training was likely to breed either servility or its counterpart, impertinence. With freedom there came a wonderful sense of dignity, strengthened by the reconstruction legislation and education. Probably the northern teachers who went South after the war taught nothing of such importance as the lesson of the equality of all men before God. How wonderful many of them were in their passionate insistence on the dignity and the power of the colored race! It was their boys grown to manhood who, when the white South was in the saddle, refused to submit to the Jim Crow car, and walked miles to and from their work. The generation after them was too often taught to accept a crust with gratitude; but today new leaders are again calling for equality between black and white, for opportunity, for self-expression, for the best things in life.

And last, the meeting showed that the economic progress of the Negro had been greatly accelerated in the last two years. Out of this horrible European war has come economic opportunity. The black man's labor is needed and he is getting into factory and workshop. A scarcity of labor has given him a quick boost toward equality, despite the southern administration of the nation's affairs, an administration that stands unequivocally for the inferiority of the Negro. The employer of labor is going up and down the South telling the black man that he is a good fellow and that if he will come up North and work in his factory he shall receive a man's wage. And the Negro goes, and gains in self-respect and in the respect of others; for this country, like every other country, is



ruled by the men who fill the pay envelopes, not by the men who are elected by the ballot.
"I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul."
Henley's song is the song of our National Association. It calls to the soul of every black man and woman to assert its captaincy. Once the master of his fate, there is no task too fine for his genius. Within him is immense reserve power. Will he come into the ranks giving all his strength to this second great battle for freedom, or will he remain behind enslaved?
MARY WHITE OVINGTON.

THE Y. M. C. A.
THE CRISIS has taken such frequent occasion to criticize the white Y. M. C. A. for its unchristian attitude toward Negroes that it is glad to note anything that shows even a beginning of opposite tendencies. In a recent issue we were able to show that the International Committee of the Y. M. C. A. definitely repudiated "The Birth of a Nation" as a Y. M. C. A. entertainment so far as its authority went.
We are also glad to learn by personal correspondence that the West Side Y. M. C. A., in New York City, has so far modified its previous intolerant attitude as to welcome colored people to its public lectures and to treat them with courtesy.
We trust that these beginnings will have influence on the strongholds of heathenism in other parts of this great movement.

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON FUND
George Washington, a Negro freedman, died at Otterville, Jersey County, Ill., in 1868. He left to six trustees (who were to be appointed by the Circuit Court of that county) a fund for the education of colored youth resident in Illinois. After the various white trustees had stolen such amounts as they could and spent considerable in litigation the remaining fund amounts today to \$23,960 and its average income during the last ten years has been \$1,000. Of this income \$400 has gone to expenses and \$600 to educate students.
The present Board seems to be honest, but not at all anxious to find colored students. Examinations are held from time to time in the county. It is necessary for colored youth in Illinois who wish a college education to see to it that these country gentlemen are prodded up and made to do their duty and that this fund instead of being dissipated in needless expenses becomes a real help to Negro education. Interested persons should write to H. L. Chapman, Jerseyville, Ill.

"FRAUD"
The January issue of THE CRISIS spoke editorially of the fraudulent work of one Thomas Hopkins. Through the efforts of CRISIS friends and persons who had been defrauded by him, Hopkins was tried and fined by the courts in Chatham and Danville, Virginia. Complaints have come to us from various points in Virginia and North Carolina concerning this man's fraud. We hope that interested persons in towns and cities where this man has carried his fraud will give him treatment similar to that which he received at the hands of interested persons in Chatham and in Danville. That THE CRISIS and its friends should be so misused by a member of the Negro race is a disgrace of the vilest sort.
A. G. DILL.

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