



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis, Vol. 5, No. 6

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THE ARMY. The Army and Navy journal publishes a translation of an article in the French Revue Militaire Generale, which says, among other things:

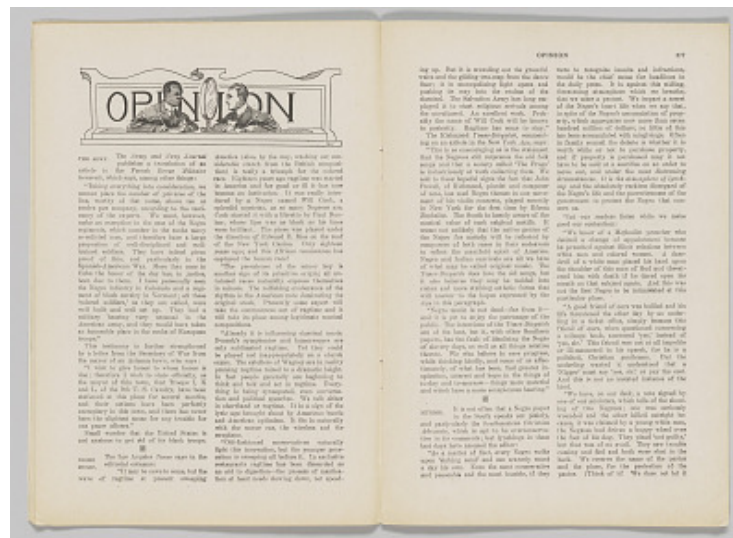
"taking everything into consideration, we cannot place the number of privates of the line, worthy of that name, above ten or twelve per company, according to the testimony of the experts. We must, however, make an exception in the ranks of Negro regiments, which number in the ranks of many re-enlisted men, and therefore have a large proportion of well-disciplined and well-trained soldiers. They have indeed given proof of this, and particularly in the Spanish-American War. More than once in Cuba the honor of the day has, in justice, been due to them. I have personally seen the Negro infantry in Colorado and a regiment of black cavalry in Vermont; all these 'colored soldiers,' as they are called, were well built and well set up. They had a military bearing very unusual in the American army, and they would have taken an honorable place in the ranks of European troops."

This testimony is further strengthened by a letter from the Secretary of War from the mayor of an Arizona town, who says:

"I wish to give honor to whom honor is due; therefore I wish to state officially, as the mayor of this town, that Troops I, K and L, of the 9th U. S. Cavalry, have been stationed at this place for several months, and their actions have been perfectly exemplary in this town, and there has never been the slightest cause for any trouble for our peace officers." Small wonder that the United States is not anxious to get rid of its black troops.

NEGRO MUSIC. The Los Angeles Times says in the editorial columns: "It may be news to some, but the wave of ragtime at present sweeping

[[right margin]] America (also, by the way, washing out considerable starch from the British composition) is really a triumph for the colored race. Eighteen years ago ragtime was started in America and for good or ill it has now become an institution. It was really introduced by a Negro named Will Cook, a splendid musician, as so many Negroes are. Cook started it with a libretto by Paul Dunbar, whose face was as black as his lines were brilliant. The piece was played under the direction of Edward E. Rice on the roof of the New York Casino. Only eighteen years ago; and this African renaissance has captured the human race! "The prevalence of the minor key is another sign of its primitive origin; all untutored races naturally express themselves in minors. The rollicking exuberance of the rhythm is the American note dominating the original stock. Presently some expert will take the commonness out of ragtime and it will take its place among legitimate musical compositions. "Already it is influencing classical music. Dvorak's symphonies and humoresques are only sublimated ragtime. Yet they could be played not inappropriately on a church organ. The extollers of Wagner are in reality praising ragtime raised to a dramatic height. In fact people generally are beginning to think and talk and act in ragtime. Everything is being syncopated, even conversation and political speeches. We talk either in shorthand or ragtime. It is a sign of the lyric age brought about by American bustle and American optimism. It fits in naturally with the motor car, the wireless and the aeroplane. "Old-fashioned conservatives naturally fight this innovation, but the younger generation is sweeping all before it. In exclusive restaurants ragtime has been discarded as an aid to digestion--the process of mastication at least needs slowing down, not speed-



[[left margin]] -ing up. But it is crowding out the graceful waltz and the gliding two-step from the dance floor; it is monopolizing light opera and pushing its way into the realms of the classical. The Salvation Army has long employed it to start religious revivals among the uncultured. An excellent work. Probably the name of Will Cook will be known to posterity. Ragtime has come to stay."

The Richmond Times-Dispatch, commenting on an article in the New York Age, says: "This is as encouraging as is the statement that the Negroes still reverence the old folk songs and that a society called 'The Frogs' is industriously at work collecting them. We add to these hopeful signs the fact that John Powell, of Richmond, pianist and composer of note, has used Negro themes in one movement of his violin concerto, played recently in New York for the first time by Efrem Zimbalist. The South is keenly aware of the musical value of such original motifs. It seems not unlikely that the native genius of the Negro for melody will be reflected by composers of both races in their endeavors to reflect the manifold spirit of America. Negro and Indian survivals are all we have of what may be called original music. The Times-Dispatch does love the old songs, but it also believes they may be molded into richer and more striking esthetic forms that will answer to the hopes expressed by the Age in this paragraph.

"Negro music is not dead--far from it--and it is yet to enjoy the patronage of the public. The intentions of the Times-Dispatch are of the best, but it, with other Southern papers, has the fault of idealizing the Negro of slavery days, as well as all things relative thereto. We who believe in race progress, while thinking kindly, and some of us affectionately, of what has been, find greater inspiration, interest and hope in the things of to-day and to-morrow--things more material and which have a more conspicuous bearing."

MURDER. It is not often that a Negro paper in the South speaks out plainly, and particularly the Southwestern Christian Advocate, which is apt to be overconservative in its comments; but lynchings in these last days have aroused the editor: "As a matter of fact, every Negro walks upon 'sinking sand' and can scarcely count a day his own. Even the most conservative and peaceable and the most humble, if they

[[right margin]] were to recognize insults and infractions, would be the chief cause for headlines in the daily press. It is against this stifling, threatening atmosphere which we breathe, that we utter a protest. We impart a secret of the Negro's heart life when we say that, in spite of the Negro's accumulation of property, which aggregates now more than seven hundred million of dollars, no little of this has been accumulated with misgivings. Often in family council the debate is whether it is worth while or not to purchase property, and if property is purchased may it not have to be sold at a sacrifice on an order to move out, and under the most distressing circumstances. It is the atmosphere of lynching and the absolutely reckless disregard of the Negro's life and the powerlessness of the government to protect the Negro that concern us.

"Let our readers listen while we make good our contention:

"We know of a Methodist preacher who desired a change of appointment because he preached against illicit relations between white men and colored women. A dare-devil of a white man placed his hand upon the shoulder of this man of God and threatened him with death if he dared open his mouth on that subject again. And this was not the first Negro to be intimidated at this particular place.

"A good friend of ours was bullied and his life threatened the other day by an underling in a ticket office, simply because this friend of ours, when questioned concerning a mileage book, answered 'yes,' instead of

'yes, sir.' This friend was not at all impolite or ill-mannered in his speech, for he is a polished, Christian gentleman. But the underling wanted it understood that a 'Nigger' must say 'yes, sir,' or pay the cost. And this is not an isolated instance of the kind.

"We have, on our desk, a note signed by one of our ministers, which tells of the shooting of two Negroes; one was seriously wounded and the other killed outright because, it was claimed by a young white man, the Negroes had driven a buggy wheel over the foot of his dog. They plead 'not guilty,' but that was of no avail. They saw trouble coming and fled and both were shot in the back. We reserve the name of the pastor and the place, for the protection of the pastor. (Think of it! We dare not let it

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