

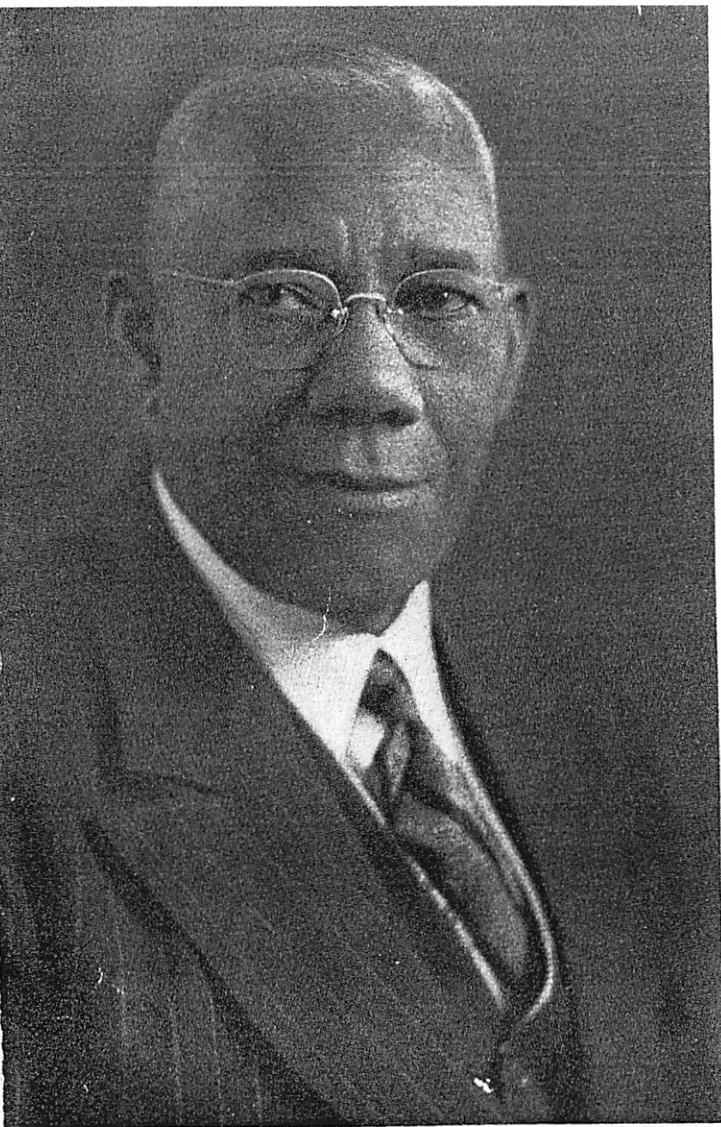
You Can't Build a Chimney From the Top

*The South through the Life of a
Negro Educator*

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Preface

I HAVE WRITTEN THIS BOOK FOR THE INTEREST AND VALUE it may have for other persons. It has been said that every man has at least one interesting book in him; that book is the story of his life. It is my hope that this book will be interesting to others, for as I review my life I find it interesting and satisfying and full.

The life of each man should have similar appeal to his own fancy. Whether it will appeal to other people may be doubtful, though I venture to say that any life which has been lived in the current of great events is interesting, if not for its own sake, then at least because of the great events which a human life outlines, as a bright thread that runs through a neutral or mixed fabric.

In my lifetime there have been many great changes in the minds, the manners, and the morals of people all over the world. This has been true particularly of the Southern part of the United States. I have lived in the South—in South Carolina and Georgia—for four-fifths of a fairly long and active life.

Of course, my duties and responsibilities have taken me frequently away from the South and into other sections of the country, and, indeed, to other parts of the world; but if I may claim a peculiar knowledge of my country, and of my fellow countrymen, that claim must rest on what I have observed and experienced as a boy and as a man in the South.

I have tried to set down here some of my observations and a few of my experiences. They help weave the threads of the lives of millions of people into the visible thread of my own life.

"Like it or lump it," this has been my life; and I propose to set down in this book certain reminiscences about my life—about that in the mixed cloth that is visible at least to me. The cloth may seem mixed and jumbled, and the thread may not always have had a direction that the Master Weaver may have intended, but the thread is there, and it is mine; and from following it through the fabric, the reader may see some pattern for one life, and, in turn, find some pattern in the whole.

Men generally are greatly interested in how white and black people live together in the South. We have our troubles, yet we continue to live together. Many feel that there is not a pattern; the threads seem too mixed, too uncertain, sometimes meaningless.

It is my conviction that there is a pattern, even to the arrangement of race. The pattern is found in a fundamental goodness of all people, whether they be black or white. No man is either altogether good or altogether bad; but there are few men who are completely bad. One of the common features of goodness I have found among men I have known is a universal desire to do good for other men; to be helpful; to relieve distress, and to raise their fellow man, if he is in the depths, to a place of dignity and worth.

This desire may show itself in peculiar ways: It may be overlaid with doubts and shadows and contrary indications. In some ways of behaving the human good of human helpfulness may seem entirely opposed to any sound or sensible pattern.

Yet it is there; and I would say again to all men, and especially to the young men and women of my own race, it is there! It is there in the soul of the white people.

It is very important that we realize this as an inescapable fact in human nature. This is why, I think, I have taken the trouble to write this book. I want to proclaim to the young people of my race, and to the people, young and old, of all other races, that there is great good in the world, and in all people. There is, of course, also great evil, and the good re-

quires a long time for fulfillment. But the good is there, and in a long life I have sought after the good, and I have found it in places where you would not suspect its existence.

Naturally this book is not a book on ethics or religion. As I reread it, the book is the faithful story of my life; and I say again that my life is a thread in the great pattern of lives, some of which are indistinct, some others plainly evident. It is my hope that one who reads it may find in it, if not helpfulness in untangling his own life from the pattern, at least help in the realization that there is, after all, great good in the hearts of fellow human beings, and that this is the meaning of life, even as, I think, it is the meaning of my own life.

I want to acknowledge with grateful thanks services rendered by Dr. Horace Mann Bond, President of Lincoln University; Mr. A. L. Henson, who aided greatly in getting the material properly assembled; Mr. J. H. Watson and his daughter, Sarah; Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Cherry; Mr. Henry T. McIntosh, editor of the *Albany Herald*. I am very deeply appreciative of the excellent services rendered by the Honorable Chase S. Osborn, the former Governor of Michigan and world traveler, and his talented daughter, Stellanova, who gave much time and thought to whipping the manuscript into shape for printing. In other words, these good people took what I had and made what I wanted.

J. W. H.

gems is to divide and conquer. Clear evidence of this is everywhere around us in the world. Whether or not they are implicated here may be debated; but assuredly we ourselves ought not go on tightening a tension such as they might logically promote as a means toward our downfall and their dominance.

There is no denying that, when we most need a united front, we face a growing cleavage. The circle in which we find ourselves is worse than vicious—it is diabolical. Each fresh outbreak of racial animosity blows heat into the response of the Negro, the white, the North, the South; flares out upon the imagination of the world; reflects itself at Washington; lets loose, for the cure of intolerance, suggestions for intolerant treatment—all setting off further cycles of explosions. World-girdling attacks are launched upon the status of the Negro in the South, in the fear (or hope?) that the friction may be used to prove how far democracy has failed.

Of course, we know by this time that no act or event in this country, however innocent, is safe from that expert twisting which seeks to make us and our way of life unattractive. Against such perversion of fact there is no protection. However, in order to integrate ourselves and entrench our convictions, we must clarify our own understanding of this uneasy situation. The need is critical for all Americans to step together outside the clouded circle of race friction and face the larger facts.

This conflict between the races is older than history. It troubled men and nations long before the United States existed. It made the birth of this federation difficult, divided the States into opposing camps for many decades, precipitated a tragic civil war; and again today looms as a growing wedge between sections of the country and sectors of our citizens. And, mark you, if we ever do solve it happily among ourselves, it will still erect itself gargantuanly out of the continent of Africa where it has already reared its head restlessly as long ago as Gandhi's youth when, as a fledgling lawyer, he led the outcry there against discrimination.

In elemental terms, race friction is one of the growing pains of mankind; just as the erosion of mountains, the silting of river valleys, the settling of the earth's crust in quakes, and the drifting of the continents, are phases of the evolution of the globe. One of the world's zones of race disturbance happens to be in the southeastern United States. Any form of government would be hampered and would have to be modified thereby. Our present adaptation to the problem is certainly improvable, but we must not take too much to heart the flinty words that are hurled at our democracy through lack of comprehension or with deliberate intent to stir up trouble. The difficulty is no simple knot to be untied in a dramatic twinkling, but a deep-seated complication requiring profound study and patient cooperation on the part of all concerned.

Let us first, then, accept philosophically the fact that we have in our southeastern States a complex psychological phenomenon somewhat resembling those that have existed in India, in Palestine, and in Ireland for thousands of smoldering years; that it is a cosmic ferment that is at work among us, an evolutionary trend that is a matter not of years but of epochs. We shall then abstain alike from futile stands to hold it back, and dangerous strains to accomplish with a snap of the finger what God has been working on for ages. A *laissez-faire* attitude would be unworthy. Fiat plus force is folly, for fiat creates eruptive feeling and you cannot batten down hatches over a volcano. The cooperative aim of white and black must be to find the best way to live along with and assist the slow process of nature.

In the second place, all of us must realize that control of this frictional situation in the United States is the concern of the Federal government as well as of the States. In the abstract, this is already generally conceded. It is only as to method of control that there is a sharp difference of opinion.

As a nation we will do wisely to be warned that racial maladjustment in the South cannot be cured by shaking verbal or

ades, asked for a transfer to another school, out of no dislike for the Negro but in disgust at the way the Negro vote is being sold. The bloc of Negro votes is promised and delivered for the consideration that whatever proportion the Negro population bears to the number of white citizens, that proportion of white-collar jobs is to be given Negroes. It is a cool, job-on-the-barrel proposition; the Negroes showing no concern at all about the need to fit themselves for the berths purchased.

At a recent municipal primary in Albany, Georgia, in which the Negro took part, the Afro-American population of that city voted as a bloc, without rhyme and against reason, apparently in response to a master voice. Their blind racial performance at the polls on this occasion merely aroused and integrated the action of the whites, so that the vote, finally, was of no value whatsoever to the individual Negro or to his race. Instead, it bolstered the contention that the Negro vote is merely an exertion of power by a gullible and purchaseable mass, not an expression of the judgment of free individuals. It is common knowledge that the Negroes have always been victimized by false friends. By their behavior in their recent opportunity at Albany, they re-accentuated in the mind of the white South the danger of the Negro vote as a pawn in the hands of the unscrupulous.

The significant fact is that while there is intense feeling, amounting to alarm, about the menace of the Negro bloc vote as a quick instrument in the hands of the unprincipled, thinking men, South as well as North, have no objection whatsoever to the exercise of the franchise by the responsible Negro; and there is no hesitancy in admitting the superiority of the responsible Negro as a voter over the irresponsible white.

Is it not time to pause, between executive advices and various court decisions, and ask a question that might possibly lead us out of the uneasy impasse? Is our trouble with the franchise for the Negro a race problem purely, or is it bound up with

our failure, so far, to recognize the practical limitations of the principle of democracy?

There is a story current in the Great Lakes region that begins by saying there are only forty-five states in the Union now; because Kentucky and Tennessee have been absorbed by Detroit, and Michigan has gone to Hades. That is, Detroit and Michigan are actually suffering from a vast influx of unassimilable irresponsibles, both white and black.

Could that word "irresponsible" be a key to the improvement of our machinery of government?

Is democracy, or republicanism, even ideally, based on the principle of conferring the responsibility of the vote on the irresponsible?

That query, and those following, came to our minds after we had pondered Dr. Holley's statement, "The mere fact that a man or woman has been able to keep soul and body together for twenty-one or more years should not necessarily fit him or her for the franchise."

The Declaration of Independence was against taxation without representation. Did it advocate, necessarily, representation for those who did not pay taxes? If it did connote representation for those not paying taxes, did it advocate participation in government by non-taxpayers? Did the original Constitutional Convention have some notion of individual economic responsibility as a basis for the franchise when in Section II of Article 1 they granted representation without the vote to three-fifths of all others than free men (including among these non-voters all Indians who were not taxed)?

What does the Constitution of the United States say about fitness for the franchise?

Under the Constitution, the Federal government apparently has no authority to prescribe or limit the qualifications of voters, even with respect to elections for Federal offices. Voting qualifications were left subject to the control of the States.

This absence of limitations on the franchise may have been

test. would have to be reasonably definite, suggests Edward Gearing Kemp, former Assistant to the United States Attorney General, now General Counsel of the Bureau of the Budget: otherwise the privilege of voting would be largely dependent upon the judgments of election officials.

Would not the adoption of such an amendment, abridging the right to vote to some definite floor or responsibility, lessen the number and improve the quality of Negro voters in the South; wholesomely reduce race fears and frictions in that zone; promote better understanding between that section and other sections of the nation; and, at the same time, appreciably lighten the menace of purchasable masses *on both sides of the color line*, everywhere? And would not such an amendment actually strengthen our democratic system: not only in effectiveness but in our own and others' respect for it?

What would this surgery mean in terms of democracy? Those who retained the vote, after the exclusion, would look upon it with awakened appreciation. Many hundreds of thousands of votes would be lost—but are not too many of these worth less than nothing as they now are? And would not the majority be salvageable quickly?

We are splitting the atom these days. Let us attack the idea of the vote with equal courage and intelligence. A vote is an individual preference. But how many of what we now list as potential votes are not pearls-of-great-price but pearls-before-swine—ignored, despised, neglected, bartered or hurled blindly on command? Ought we to continue to shrug our shoulders hopelessly or look about for some means to make the vote more nearly what it ought to be?—regarded as an honor, a privilege, a distinction, and a serious responsibility. What is there of sacredness in this idea of a vote as a birthright—so cheaply valued that continually it is trodden under foot—that we should hold that sentimental concept above the vote as a mark of respected achievement? Why should we hesitate to bestow honor where it is due, and place responsibility where it will be carried,

by establishing a distinction between voting and non-voting citizens?

Salvageable quickly, we have said the majority of discarded votes would be. Many citizens, demoted from the right to vote because of mental inertia or moral turpitude, would be shocked out of their slumbers into an effort to regain a status clothed in new dignity. States would be spurred to full speed in providing adult education and improved elementary schools in order to retain the Congressional representation endangered by a large non-voting population. The Federal government, able definitely to put its finger on the spots North and South, metropolitan and rural, where the cesspools of ignorance breed racial intolerance and other ills of mind and body, could at once effectively stake off emergency zones and pour Federal educational funds into the draining of these danger areas.

Washington spends great sums of money stamping out malaria and other physical menaces. Ignorance is more deadly. There would be an inspiring goal in a definite effort to lift masses of whites and Negroes and Indians quickly to the franchise-floor. This would be setting slaves free in a way that the mere granting of the franchise never has done.

Let this be executed wisely, within existing patterns, according to the customs of the region. Stress good school teachers first, second and third; then curricula; then school buildings. Place adult and elementary education far before secondary, and secondary far before college education in this program; but lift them all, and white and black equally. In order to promote economic responsibility, provide adequate training in home-making and industrial and technical branches, especially for the Negro, because facilities for these fields of preparation now are shamefully denied him. Instill kindly human relationships through song and story; and distinctly revive in instruction an emphasis on character.

Bringing all this back to its application to the race problem, give the illiterate whites and Negroes equally first-class schools

YOU CAN'T BUILD A CHIMNEY FROM THE TOP

that force, like an icy wind, retards the process; that tact is like sunshine, education our best instrument, and time our ally.

CHASE S. OSBORN

STELLANOVA OSBORN

*Possum Poke in Possum Lane,
Poulan, Worth County, Georgia,*

December 11, 1947

1. My Childhood

... And what fair fields are these!

I WAS BORN ON THE McCANT'S PLANTATION ON THE OUTSKIRTS of Winnsboro, South Carolina, on April 3, 1874. This was nine years after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House. Many country people used to date the important events of birth and marriage and death by the seasons; it is common even now to find a child who will tell you that he was born "in harvest time," or for a mother to give you the age of her child by "planting time." I was more fortunate. My parents were intelligent enough to follow calendar dates, and in turn they were aided by the fresh memory of the great date of the "Surrender."

If a Yankee newspaper man or magazine writer had described Winnsboro at the time when I was born, or even now, he would probably call it a "sleepy little Southern town," in the same way that he would probably use the labels "bustling Midwestern town" or "rough and ready Western town" or "quiet New England village" as part of the stock in trade for other places the size of Winnsboro. Labels may be convenient and valuable, but they are too short to tell you everything that is in the bottle, as many a morning-after headache can testify.

Winnsboro was "sleepy," and it was "little," and it was very "Southern," but it had human beings in it; and these human beings had memories, and lived a life that linked them to other human beings in towns either sleepier or more bustling, in New England or the West, or in the rest of the world. It is the county seat of Fairfield County, located in the geographical center of South Carolina. To the west rise the foothills of the Piedmont, and to the east stretch the Lowlands. In the old days of John C. Calhoun, Fairfield was borderland

The main highway from Columbia to Charlotte ran through the Monticello plantation, southwest of Winnsboro and extending for some distance along the banks of the Broad River. This plantation was the birthplace of my father. It was owned by two brothers who came to America from Scotland, one of whom was Nathaniel Holley. It was from this man that my father got both his blood and his name.

I have said that this account of my life is also a story of the education of Negroes. The big plantations were self-sufficient units. The owners thought it unwise to have any considerable number of free people mixed with their slaves. They did not want many free Negroes around, for fear that these would provide dangerous examples and agitation to corrupt the minds of the bondsmen. A large free white population was equally undesirable because of low standard of living for laboring white people enforced by competition with slave labor and slaves. The masters, therefore, tried to get along with as few white persons as possible. All of this meant that in a time when transportation for goods and people was extremely difficult, every skill had to be immediately available if the life of a large plantation were to go on successfully.

Each plantation, therefore, became a kind of practical industrial school. Since skilled slaves were in great demand and commanded high prices, it was much cheaper to educate a skilled slave than to buy one. Every plantation had to have a blacksmith and wheelwright, bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, painters, leather workers, and the like. The wise planter saw to it that he always had in readiness some young slave apprentice coming along with the ability to take the place of the old skilled slave.

My father was trained to work in leather; he was an expert harness and saddle maker. His specialty was fine whips, which were used not only on the Nat Holley Place, but over the surrounding countryside. There were many masters who needed

these articles to make up for the lack of corn in the life of their stock and, of course, to emphasize orders given to slaves.

The memories of slaves of the old days are frequently conflicting, and present a mixed picture of relations between master and slave. Few ex-slaves will tell you stories of personal cruelty to them by their masters. They will talk about a mean "old marster" or "mistress" who lived over on the next plantation; but generally they speak with pride and affection of their own particular masters. My father took a certain pride in saying that, while he had been whipped by his master, no other man ever laid a finger on him.

I have said that my father received an excellent "vocational education." Speaking again in the terms of present-day educational usage, he also had a thorough "character education," even though a slave. Every night, before going to bed, our family went through a series of religious devotions. My father sang well and he liked best of all the Negro melodies—the spirituals—of his own people. My mother was partial to the hymns she had learned while attending—with the other slaves—the common church for white and black that was a feature of those olden days. My father was trained in the strict tradition of Scottish Presbyterians: he was scrupulous about keeping the Sabbath and in performing the simple duties of the professing Christian who took his religious obligations seriously.

My mother could neither read nor write, and yet she, too, had been "educated." Her mistress had given her constant instruction in the English Bible. She knew many passages by heart; and this is an apt description of the way she did know and feel them. Among those I remember having heard her repeat with exactness and sensitive expression were the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Story of the Prodigal Son, the 23rd and the 119th Psalms, and others.

Our nightly religious exercises were therefore complete:

a special aptitude for fishing and hunting. This, too, is education of a sort, passed on from one generation to another; and all my life I have owned a number of trained dogs and kept up with hunting and fishing.

The McCant's plantation covered nearly five thousand acres. After the War it was cut up into sections which were farmed by sharecroppers. My father was the only renter on the place; there were twenty-five or thirty croppers.

Sharecropping has been severely criticized, and yet it is difficult to see how any other method could have been used in the South after the War if the farms were to be operated, and if the people—white and black—were to eat. There were few Negroes who were fitted to carry on independent operations. Not many had my father's experience and sense of responsibility. No one had any capital. The Freedmen's Bureau was the government agency which for some years after the War was given the responsibility for caring for the Negroes and helping to adjust them to their new life as freemen. At first the Federals—as they were called when they were not called "Yankees"—tried to substitute for the slave system a plan for paid day labor. The wages for farm workers were set, and the land owners could be called into court if they did not follow out the schedule of payments fixed by the Bureau agents.

This plan soon broke down. It *had* to break down. There was no capital to finance weekly, monthly, or even yearly cash pay rolls. Cotton sold for extremely high prices for the first three years after the War, but then it dropped until, after the panic of 1873—the year before I was born—it reached the bottom level that has almost ever since kept the Southern people on starvation standards of existence.

The only possible solution was sharecropping. The owners had little besides the land, the workers had little besides the ability to labor. The owner had also some skill and experience in supervision. Due to the lack of cash, a system developed

by which the owner traded his land and skill and experience and supervision for the labor he needed. Both partners were to share the finished product—the crop; and the settlement was to be made at the end of the year, usually at Christmas when the harvest was past and spring planting had not yet begun.

The landowner, having no capital, yet had the responsibility for feeding and clothing his labor through the winter months. He therefore went to the local bank to borrow the required money, and usually had to pay through the nose for it, for cotton farming was, at best, a gamble. The local banker had likewise to go to larger banks for *his* capital, and so there developed a sort of pyramid with high interest rates piled upon higher interest rates, all resting on the shoulders of the man at the bottom, the sharecropper.

It was a distinct advantage to have a large "labor force." My father was above the average in the opportunities Negroes possessed; he had also considerable assets in labor. Our roof sheltered father, mother, and thirteen children. With the two mules and three dogs, this brought the number in the household to twenty. This is not intended as a joke. The mules and the dogs were so important to us that they were members of the family as much as any of the children; if a mule should die, his loss would be really mourned.

I have said that our life was simple. About all the clothes a boy had in those days was a long shirt reaching about halfway between the knees and ankles. This garment was "all wool" if not a yard wide, gathered from the sheep on the plantation and made into cloth by my mother, who had her own loom on which she wove the fabric. She spun the yarn from which she knitted the socks and stockings for the whole family. As I grew older, a change took place in the clothing customs of the country. Meal and flour sacks began to be plentiful as trade increased, and these were made into shirts. Each boy had his own shirt which was washed two or three times a week. In the spring and summer the washing was done by the wearer just

telling them that unless they elected him Governor so that he could disfranchise the Negro, dire things would happen to the white people of the State. In order, as they thought, to save their civilization, the whites rallied to Smith and elected him Governor, and later United States Senator. After this, things quieted down until someone else wanted to be Governor, and the Negroes were again dragged into the white primary for only one purpose. When that purpose failed the white people joined hands again; and I suppose we will have peace until somebody else wants to be Governor.

The Negro has had little or no training in the use of the ballot. He is too often led by outsiders who have small interest in him or in the Southern white man either. Like Hitler, they follow a policy of "divide and conquer." It has been the plan of the C. I. O.-P. A. C. to array race against race and class against class—anything to cause disunity and strife. For where there is unity, peace, and prosperity, no real progress can be made by outside influences and forces. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that both races be educated in the art of government and the use of the ballot. Our schools and colleges could render the State a great service by thus training the youth of the State, white and black.

Until the Negro and the poor white man of the South have a real, earnest desire to vote and are willing to make some sacrifices in order to exercise that right, we need not expect any large number to assume the duties devolving upon electors.

Again, we must eschew politics as a means of making money and allow no man to drag us down by accepting his money for our vote. One of the most damaging charges made against the Negro is that his vote is for sale, and this applies not only to the small fellow but the higher-ups.

Our election laws should be revised in such a way as to confine the ballot to persons who are trained and know the value of the franchise. There should be both the ownership of

property and a fairly good education as requirements for registration to vote. The mere fact that a man or woman has been able to keep soul and body together for twenty-one years or more should not necessarily fit him or her for the franchise. For, with all the opportunities for acquiring a fair degree of education in America open to both Negroes and whites, it is inexcusable for one not to be able to pass a reasonable educational test.

The Negroes' greatest need, as I see it, is a sane, sound, unselfish leadership. The great masses of the colored people, as well as the common run of white people, are honest at heart. When properly directed they will respond to an appeal for upright and clean living. Particularly is this true when it comes to rallying to the defense of their firesides.

Speaking along this same line, Federal Attorney General Clark has said:

"The average colored citizen of America is a good citizen and deserves better treatment at the hands of democracy, but Communism is not the answer, and Communist leadership will not cure it.

"The average colored citizen is too intelligent and too good an American to follow the leadership of those who pay lip service to democracy but would bring the slavery, the purges, the atheisms of Communism upon our people.

"The average colored citizen is proud of his Americanism, and I say to you that there are no better Americans, and few who have contributed as much to the upbuilding of this country of ours."

/ / /

THE NEGRO has gained very little from his spasmodic activity in politics. He is always left out when the election is over and it does not make any difference with which faction or party he votes. "To the victor belongs the spoils" does not apply to the

Negro. It doesn't make any difference who wins, the Negro loses. He is hitched on the outside like poor Uncle Ned.

It is said that once upon a time a white man went up to heaven and asked to be admitted. When he knocked on the door the guardian angel from within said, "who comes there?"

"Mr. Jones from Yorktown," was the reply.

"What does Mr. Jones want?"

"I want to get into Heaven."

"Are you mounted or afoot?"

"I am afoot."

"No man unmounted can enter these pearly gates."

Downhearted and dejected, Mr. Jones started back to the earth, but on his way he met Uncle Ned.

"Where are you going, Uncle Ned?"

"Boss, I'se trying to get to Heaven so I can rest my weary bones."

"I am awful sorry for us. No man can get to Heaven unless he is mounted. I tell you, Uncle Ned, you bend down and let me get on your back and ride you up there and when Gabriel asks if I am mounted, I'll say, 'Yes,' and we'll ride right in and we both will get into Heaven."

So the ever-accommodating Negro bent his back and the always-willing white man to use the black man to pull chestnuts, got aboard and up they went.

"Who comes there?"

"Mr. Jones of Yorktown."

"What does Mr. Jones want?"

"I want to get into Heaven."

"Are you mounted or afoot?"

"I am mounted," was the victorious reply.

"Well, hitch your mount on the outside and come right in."

The Negro always gets the tarred end of the stick. The boys on the old McCant's Plantation used to sing, when the croppers and wage hands came to the big house for settlement around Christmas times, songs that ran like this:

*"An ought is an ought
And a figure is a figure
All for the white man
And none for the Nigger"*

or

*"You may work on the railroad,
You may work on the freight,
You may get up in the morning
And work till late,
You may work around the house
Till the big setting time—
It makes no difference—
You are coming out behind."*

Thus it has been—thus it is. But the future is long and one can keep on working in the hope that it will not be *thus* always.

A noteworthy municipal primary election was held recently in Albany, Georgia, One candidate for Mayor ran on a reform platform, pledging many improvements for the city. He had the approval of the most progressive citizens, although some of these leaders had been anti-Talmadge in 1946 and this candidate had been the local chairman of and a considerable contributor to the Talmadge campaign. Because this local reform candidate was said to have delivered what was styled "race-baiting speeches" in the Talmadge campaign, the Negroes of Albany seemingly under "command of a voice," without regard to what was best for the community as a whole, voted 819 to 55 for another candidate whose record was claimed to be of greater fairness to them. Automobile loads of Negroes lined up at the polls; it became difficult for a white man to vote. Among the whites indignation mounted against the race-bloc tactics. Telephones started to ring. Then cars loaded with determined whites began to arrive at the polling booths, to outvote the blacks. Next day the distinguished Albany *Herald*

rejoiced in bold headlines for victory won in spite of the Negro bloc. There had been no race-baiting in this particular campaign: the Negroes had themselves injected the race issue; the white men had responded in the same vein; and again the Negro lost.

In other words, bloc voting, though not inherently wrong, is a boomerang unless used with the most delicate moral and psychological discretion. Says the *Albany Herald* editorially:

"Political power is short-lived that depends upon cheap abuses of a constitutional privilege. . . .

"Perhaps, as a result of Monday's election, Albany has come nearer the day when all voters, white and Negro, will be free to express themselves conscientiously in all elections, not as blocs with a color line dividing them, but as citizens who have the highest interest of city, state and nation at heart."

Two further editorials concerning this significant Albany primary election are, in part, as follows:

The *Atlanta Journal*, under the headline, "Bloc Voting," said:

"To the charge that the Negroes of Albany voted in a bloc in the recent city primary, the *Atlanta Daily World* presents effectively the viewpoint of that racial minority in a well-reasoned, well-expressed editorial. Since the incident has become something of a state-wide issue, we think it not only the part of fairness but also the part of intellectual honesty to state the *World's* views.

"First the *World* says that the winning candidate had managed the 1946 campaign of the late Eugene Talmadge in Dougherty county; that he took the stump for him wherever Mr. Talmadge was unable to fill an engagement; that he presented a check for \$500 to Mr. Talmadge at a rally in Mitchell county and 'employed the same brand of race-baiting as did the senior Talmadge in several radio speeches he made in the course of the campaign.'

"So when the candidate ran for Mayor, the *World* says,

'pride and self-respect forced Negroes to register their protest to such a campaign of hate and reaction. Negroes cast a preponderant vote for a candidate who had a record for good will and fair play toward them.'

"The newspaper concludes with a paragraph, the truth of which is self-evident. 'Church people vote together in order to obtain favorable legislation. Labor groups league together to elect a winner who will be fair with them. More than that, the South has voted and continues to vote in such a solid bloc in national elections, no matter what the issues are. If bloc voting is a threat and a plague in local elections, it is no less a plague to progressive government in national elections.'"

The *Atlanta Constitution*, under the headline, "Bloc Voting and Blunt Facts," sums up the case:

"Having borne the brunt of the race baiter's abuse for our long and continuing efforts to befriend him, we thought we could indulge in occasional constructive criticism of the Negro without being accused of narrowness.

"Thus it was that—after carefully investigating to ascertain the facts in the case—we recently carried an editorial 'Bloc-voting in Albany,' wherein we decried the tendency of Negroes to vote as a group without regard to individual preferences. In summation, we quoted the *Albany Herald*, another recognized Southern spokesman for Negro rights, on the results of Albany's recent municipal election.

" 'The sharp lesson is that the Negroes through thoughtless leadership are defeating their own ends,' declared the *Herald*. 'Only a marked change in their voting conduct, permitting a true record of individual judgment, will attain for them the consideration and security for which they are striving.'

"This view enraged the highly partisan Negro press and set off cries of 'foul' from the race's professional apologists.

"That reaction being expected, we had not thought to dignify it with an answer, but the *Herald* does such a neat job of it, with what Editor Gray calls 'some of those very stubborn things called facts,' that we herewith reprint a few:

" 'The Mayor-elect's principal opponent and the candidate

for whom that imposing bloc of Negro votes was cast, has been as consistent and outspoken a supporter of Eugene Talmadge as any Dougherty Countian. He is a man of the highest community standing and a consistent Talmadgeite. So much for that.

"Furthermore, the Mayor-elect did not make a single reference to the racial issue in any of his radio addresses during the campaign. It is a perversion of truth and a complete disregard of provable fact to make such a charge. So much, also, for that.

"Moreover, the successful candidate in the recent primary has long been regarded in Albany as an outspoken friend of the Negroes of the community. He has been their most favored legal counsel. In 1943 they expressed their high regard in a testimonial program which was voluntarily presented. And when, no longer ago than last Sunday night in the very same Albany Negro Church where a meeting exactly a week before had 'built the vote bloc' and set it against him, he appeared by invitation, told the large assemblage that he proposes to see to it that the Negro in Albany gets justice and fair play, he was given something of an ovation.

"He made his race on the issue of law enforcement and what he declared were needed reforms in the police and other departments of the City government. That is what elected him. He did not raise the racial issue. He meticulously avoided it. His Talmadge record was no more than an excuse, even if it was that, and the fact that the Negro bloc failed to defeat him may suggest to intelligent Negro citizens that they will do well in future elections to inquire into the motives of these who tell them that only by bloc voting can they win recognition of their rights.

"It just isn't true, and these facts are placed in the record because they belong there.'

"The *Herald*, like the *Constitution*, while speaking out for the Negro at every opportunity, obviously has no intention of withholding criticism where it is due.

"We would not be his real friend if we did."

A highly important point illuminated by this incident is that the white citizens of Georgia have nothing against the idea of voting by the Negro; but they do resent and oppose with their full might the motives and methods of those by whom the Negro has allowed his vote to be used.

I do not want to be scary, but I see what is happening in France and Italy and cannot keep from wondering if my people are being trained to blind obedience to a master's voice.