

DOCTOR WASHINGTON AND DINNER FUNCTIONS

(Continued From First Page)

train, shook hands cordially with Washington, expressed his pleasure at the meeting, looked Washington over carefully and ejaculated: "Say, you are a great man. You are the greatest man in this country." Washington mildly protested, but the man insisted, "Yes, sir, the greatest man in this country." Washington expressed the opinion that Roosevelt was the greatest man in the country, which brought out this scornful response: "Huh! Roosevelt? I used to think that Roosevelt was a great man until he ate dinner with you. That settled him for me."

As a result of this and other incidents, Washington concluded that "the curious nature of this thing we call prejudice—social prejudice, race prejudice and all the rest," makes any attempt to disturb it unwise. Yet four years later he was again the object of even more bitter censure for attending the Wanamaker dinner. His position on such matters was set forth by him in a letter to Edgar Gardiner Murphy, a southerner, author of "The Present South." Mr. Murphy was alarmed over these attacks and over their possible effect upon the work at Tuskegee, which he regarded as highly important. He wrote to Washington about his fears, and received a long letter. This is an extract:

"I have never attended a purely social function given by white people anywhere in the country. Nearly every week I receive invitations to weddings of rich people, but these I always refuse. Mrs. Washington almost never accompanies me on any occasion where there can be the least sign of purely social intercourse. Whenever I meet white people in the north at their offices, in their parlors, or at their dinner tables, or at banquets, it is with me purely a matter of business, either in the interest of our institution or in the interest of my race; no other thought ever enters my mind. For me to say now, after fifteen years of creating interest in my race and in this institution in that manner, that I must stop, would simply mean that I must cease to get money in a large measure for this institution. In meeting the people in this way I am simply doing what the head of practically every school, black or white, in the south is constantly doing. For purely social pleasure I have always found all my ambitions satisfied among my own people, and you will find that in proportion as the Colored race become educated and prosperous, in the same proportion is this true of all Colored people.

The dinner with the kind and queen of Denmark created embarrassments of a different kind. The king was interested in Washington's work because of its possible application to the large Negro population of those Danish islands in the West Indies which we are probably soon to possess. Here is the way this visit of the ex-slave to royalty was afterwards described by the ex-slave:

"As I entered the reception-room there were about twenty or twenty-five people who were to be entertained at dinner. I will not attempt to describe the elegance, not to say splendor, of everything in connection with the dinner. As I ate food for the first time in my life out of gold dishes, I could not but recall the time when as a slave boy I ate my syrup from a tin plate.

"I think I got through the dinner pretty well by following my usual

custom, namely, of watching other people to see just what they did and what they did not do. There was one place, however, where I confess I made a failure. It is customary at the King's table, as it is true at other functions in many portions of Europe, I understand, to drink a silent toast to the King. This was so new and strange to me that I decided that, since I did not understand the custom, the best thing was to frankly confess my ignorance. I reassured myself with the reflection that people will easier pardon ignorance than pretense.

"At a certain point during the dinner each guest is expected, it seems, to get the eye of the king and then rise and drink to the health of the King. When he rises he makes a bow to the King and the King returns the bow. Nothing is said by either the King or the guest. I think practically all the invited guests except myself went through this performance. It seemed to me a very fitting way of expressing respect for the King, as the head of a nation and as a man, and now that I know something about it, I think if I had another chance I could do myself credit in that regard."

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