

THE LATE RACE RIOTS

White Woman Writes Her Personal Experiences in Recent Race Troubles in Washington.

(From The Nation, New York.)
To the Editor of The Nation:

Sir: On Tuesday night, when so many in Ledroit Park feared a mob and a general massacre, and when most white men believed that a white woman who ventured into that section would be literally devoured, I took it into my head to go there and go I did. I went for several reasons. One was to prove that a white woman could do it; another because I knew what had been done by the authorities and thought that a little reassurance from a lone and harmless woman might go a good way, for I guessed the probable psychological state in that section. Besides I wanted to know at first hand that the Colored people were doing and thinking. I found out. If I talked to one Colored man, I talked to a hundred and fifty. Occasionally I would stop to speak to one I knew; oftener I would accost a group of unknown men and ask them for their views. Always and everywhere I met with courtesy and attention. As we talked, men would appear from the shadows—seemingly from the night itself—until there were perhaps twenty of us. Only once did I see a policeman, who glanced at us curiously, but said nothing and passed slowly on. And when we had finished our talk, the group would melt into nothingness and I would proceed on my quest.

I saw no women at all. And the men—why, those men were not out to "start something." They were armed, most of them, and were quite frank about it, but they did not want a fight. They said they were out to see if a mob was coming, and, if there were, they were going home to barricade themselves; then if the mob tried to get in, there was trouble ahead. As one put it: "A man would be less than a man if he did not fight for his family and his home." Their state of mind was not primarily fight. It was fear, a perfect hysteria of dread lest, as more than one expressed it, "a new East St. Louis" was at hand. And, as with all hysteria, a small occurrence would have set them off in a frenzy. Dynamite! They were 'INT. Again and again I was asked: "Is a mob gathering on Pennsylvania avenue? Will they come up and burn us out? Is the Park cordoned. For they did not dare go down town far enough to see if the troops were really there. Over and over, I heard the pathetic question: "Do the white folks care? Does anyone care? Are they really doing anything?" I told them that the best of the whites did care, but that they were helpless. I told them also that measures had really been taken that afternoon and what they were—that there really was military, as well as police protection. One queer old man remarked: "Well, I reckon somebody wouldn't come out to tell us about it." A one-handed soldier said: "I enlisted; I gave the country my hand, and I was ready to give more. When I was in France, I was a man and a soldier, but when I got back here I'm not a citizen; I'm not a man, even—just a big, black brute." It was not said bitterly; it went deeper than bitterness. He spoke like a man with a broken heart. Another said: "They said this is to protect the white women. My father was in charge of a whole plantation and a family of white women during the civil war. They weren't afraid to leave the white women with us then, and Colored men are no different now."

Many of them expressed a liking for, and confidence in, the captain of the precinct, and, when a man of one race speaks well of a man of another, during a race riot, that means something. But they spoke of the lack of Colored police, and the fact that Colored men were being dropped from the force and that none had been appointed since 1910. "You know," they said, "that we could talk better to Colored police. They would reason with the people and not just knock them 'round. They know who the people are and what is going on, and they could stop a lot of trouble without arrests. But they don't want to give us a chance."

I saw but one noisy Negro, a half-

witted and dishevelled-looking fellow, talking loudly and belligerently. Two Colored men seized and thoroughly shook him, telling him that if he did not "shut up and get home," he would certainly find things happening to him. Once an excited Colored boy came flying on a bicycle with the news that a white mob had formed inside the cordon and was on its way. "Let's go meet them," said one young hot-head. This was at once negated. "We'll watch and see if they are coming, and if they are, we will go home and lock the doors. That's what Captain Doyle said, and he knows what's what." So, for a few tense moments, we stood peering into the drizzly gloom, not knowing what might after all be about to come. But all was quiet, and we silently drifted our ways.

And thus it went for two hours. I met them—not savages, not red-handed murderers, but citizens, hunted and terrified, looking more or less hopelessly to their government for aid; human beings craving the hand of brotherhood and cut to the very heart. I thought of Belgium. I remembered that my country stands abroad for liberty, justice, and the rights of men, though she has them not at home. How blind we are, we Anglo-Saxons who talk of freedom and have not yet freed our souls. But still I hope and dimly see a dawn—red, it is true, but still a far-off dawn.

A white man once said to me: "You talk like a Negro. You seem at times to identify yourself with them. Have you lost your race consciousness?" I replied: "I hope I think enough like them to show you how they feel. I hope I always lose race consciousness when it stands in the way of my consciousness of common humanity." Then he said a queer thing: "I do not know whether you are mad or inspired." I had been thinking of going to Serbia, but I believe my duty is here. I believe that our country needs all of us who are standing along the color line. I am ready to do anything possible, to whatever limit. If you, to whom I look as a leader in this situation, should ever need my services, you have but to speak. My soul is aflame, not with the glare of the destroying torch, but with the steady, incandescent glow which cannot be extinguished.

Washington, July 20. E. G. M.

"THE TORTURED NEGRO OR THE CRY FOR JUSTICE"

THIS is the title of a unique epic dealing with racial friction in the United States, by an eminent Jewish poet of California, Mr. Louis Muchel. The Colored people throughout the land will be interested in the brochure just published by the California Eagle Press. The telling blows struck for truth by the author can readily be appreciated from the following ringing words which comprise the first chapter:

Strike out, oh Lincoln land, cry loud
Once more for freedom, truth and right;
Strike out for justice clean and proud—
Justice at home with love and light;
No world can be peaceful and free—
Nor can we guide the nations all—
When this republic fails to see
The Negro doomed, pathetic thrall!
Strike out, oh land, thy shame, thy sore—
Oh, strike thy Negro child no more!

America, thy glory balks,
Thy liberty not fairness spells,
The liar blooms, the lyncher walks
With head erect, the braggart yells
Of whites supreme, of black folks crushed,
Of state rights' yarns and other crimes—
America, thy pulse is hushed
And freedom dies in madmen's slimes;
Oh, break the tortured Negro's chains
And save thyself from shame and pains!

We give the Negro flag and sword,
The front line in huge battles' roar—
We give him sometimes praise of word
But all times insults and back door;
We close the shops, the chance for him
And ridicule his race, his face,
His soul we wreck, his light we dim—
Oh God, is this a land of grace?
The black horse thrives, the black coal burns,
The black man suffers (weeps and yearns!

What right have we to lynch the clan
That toil in peace and fight in war?
Why scorn with Jim Crow car Ham's man
And steal his ballot, book, bread, bar?
How can we be a nation true
If tend'rest hearts we martyr wild?—
No black man our presidents slew—
Kind soul has he just like a child
And brains and brawn and traits that are
A national need and shining star!—

We forced him here crude, undefiled,
A nature man, a chattel slave—
Through blood and tears, reviled, beguiled
He bore his burden, honest, suave!

When John Brown rose and Lincoln spoke
We wrung the shackles from his wrist,
But forged a subtler, trickier yoke
Of jealousy and race-hate mist!
How can we when he has made good
Deny him mankind's brotherhood?

He stood the test of gun and pen;
He winged the heights of muse and art;
He trod the road of greatest men;
He scored in steadfastness and heart;
He gave the world the nobler thought;
"Be kind and merciful to foes,
Be gentler far than those that wrought
The iron heel, the bitter woes!"
In pains he cheered, in tears he smiled
A freeman, though at home, exiled!

From auction block to lynching post,
From bloodhound chase to Jim Crow car,
From flogging brute to Ku Klux ghost,
From old-time gag to racial war—
The scenes have changed, the forms are new,
But persecution still blights here—
The Negro, like the wand'ring Jew
Moans crucified in Gentiles' sphere!—
But through fire, blood, rope, scorn and thorn
Ham's hosts will rise, soul-cleansed,
reborn!

From slave-bound state to modern drudge
Was fateful span of strife-marked years!—
No rebuffs, snubs or meanest grudge—
No slayers' bands, nor cowards' fears
Can squelch the race, nor halt its pace,
Nor this republic to find light,
As wondrous progress in scant space
The Negro won with hardest fight!
No other tribe on earth has done
So much, so quick in spiteful zone!

Strike down, oh Lincoln land, strike down
The biased knave, the lynching mob!—
Thief, burglar, murderer, rapist, clown
Not typical make black man's job!—
To foist rare crimes upon a race
So brave in stress, so meek in peace
Is national sin and white disgrace—
Great God, when will this slander cease?
The Negro as a race not rapers,
The white man as a race fate shapes!

The Only Solution
Let right prevail and wrong disband
And purge our land from tyrant's stand
When Negroes die where white men stand

Black blood destroys oppressors' claws!
Home, school, church, court, farm,
mine, wold, mill,
The public grill and sleeping place—
Thyself, dear land, thy heart, mind, will
Belong to both, white and black race!
The earth must be safe hearth for all,
White cannot stand, if black must fall!

Don't go around with a chip on your shoulder, because it offers a strong temptation to some other fellow to knock it off.

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The Negro Soldier
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The Crusader Magazine
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