

LEADING EDITORIALS OF THE DAY

Omaha

Perhaps Italy could be persuaded to be mandatory for Omaha, suggested a United States senator after reading of the riots in the Nebraska city, in the course of which citizens set fire to the jail and court house, attempted to hang the mayor when he protested in the name of law and order, and finally lynched a Negro prisoner, afterward dragging his body through the streets at the end of a rope, and an eastern cartoonist depicts Lenine reading the same news item with a grin of approval and the comment, "They're learning." Omaha's orgy of mob-madness, as papers of all sections join with the Milwaukee Journal in reminding us, is only "a horrible symptom of a general spirit of lawlessness." What makes the action of the Omaha mob all the more sinister, remarks the Indianapolis News, is that "it might have happened anywhere else in this country;" and many editors recall the recent outbreaks of race-rioting in East St. Louis, Knoxville, Washington and Chicago. Such crimes against civilization, says the Boston Transcript, "puts every American on the defensive before the world—the world which Americans went forth, only a few months ago, to make safe for democracy." "Where will Hades break loose next?" asks the Washington Star, which sees the mob spirit spreading and lawlessness putting on an ever bolder front. "Omaha, Boston, Washington, Chicago with bloody fingers a warning to the American people," exclaims the Chicago Tribune.

In Omaha, on the day after the lynching, the World-Herald said editorially: "We have felt, however briefly, the fetid breath of anarchy on our cheeks. We have experienced the cold chill of fear which it arouses. We have seen as in a nightmare its awful possibility. We have learned how frail is the barrier which divides civilization from the primal jungle, and we have been given to see clearly what the barrier is. It is the law. It is the might of the law wisely and fearlessly administered. It is the respect for and obedience to the law on the part of the members of society. When these fail us, all things fail. When these are lost, all will be lost. Should the day ever come when the rule that was in Omaha Sunday night became the dominant rule, the grasses of the jungle would overspread our civilization, its wild denizens human and brute, would make their foul feast on the ruins, and the God who rules over us would turn his face in horror from a world given over to bestiality. May the lesson of Sunday night sink deep!"

The feature of the Omaha riot that somewhat differentiates it from previous crimes of the same nature, while emphasizing the sinister spirit of anarchy that inspires them all, is the murderous assault upon Mayor E. P. Smith when he attempted to address the mob. Omaha dispatches report a recent epidemic of crimes committed by Negroes in that city, culminating in an assault upon a nineteen-year-old white girl. On Sunday night, September 28, the correspondents tell us, a mob of five thousand stormed the court house where the Negro charged with this crime was imprisoned and demanded that the authorities hand him over to them. When this demand was refused they set fire to the court house with incendiary bombs, imperiling the lives of more than a hundred prisoners and officials, and turned upon the building a fusillade of shots. When the mayor appeared upon the court house steps and began to address the mob as "fellow citizens" the leaders interrupted him with shouts of "give us that nigger." When he replied, "I can't do that, boys," he was seized by the men nearest him and dragged to a point several blocks away. "Lynch him," shouted some one in the crowd, and in a moment a rope was round his neck and he was strung up to a trolley wire. Somebody cut him down, but the mob readjusted the rope and pulled him up again. When a group of policemen rescued him he was bleeding at the nose and mouth, but still conscious. At the hospital where he was taken his condition was found to be critical, but he ultimately rallied. In the meanwhile, the mob wreaked its fury on the Negro, Brown, who had been handed over to it by his fellow prisoners when they faced the alternative of being burned alive. His body was riddled with bullets, partially burned and dragged through the streets behind an automobile. Afterward rioting continued, with threats against the Negro population, until federal troops under Gen. Leonard Wood took charge of the situation.

Behind all these outbreaks, avers the Rev. John Albert Williams in the Omaha Monitor, a Negro paper, is "the unexplainable and regrettable race prejudice which unfortunately looms large in American life and is latent or dormant in the most liberal and broad-minded communities." The lynching in Omaha, he argues, "is directly traceable to the fanning of race prejudice by sensational reports in two of the daily newspapers of this city of alleged crimes by Negroes against white women."

Whatever the provocation may have been, declares the Omaha News, "it does not warrant any band of men taking the law into their own hands unless they are prepared to face the judgment of their fellow citizens for such an act. It is absolutely necessary that the men who participated in the riot should be brought to account to find justification for what they did." "The time has come for the public authorities to deal with mob crimes, mercilessly and relentlessly," exclaims the Pittsburg Post, and dispatches indicate that this opinion is held also in Omaha, where the authorities have taken immediate steps to identify those who took part in the lynching of Brown and the attack on Mayor Smith, and to prosecute them. This vigorous action of the local authorities, says the New York Globe, is to no small degree due to pressure from the war department, which, having been called upon to restore order, "is insisting that the job be done thoroughly and permanently." Further evidence of federal interest in this problem is supplied by a resolution introduced by Senator Curtis of Kansas, calling for a senatorial investigation into recent race riots and lynchings. —The Literary Digest.

As to Social Equality—From the Negro Man's Viewpoint.

To the Kansas City Star: If I so desired I could start a race riot. It would be necessary only to select the psychological moment to make skillful use of the term "social equality." If the wisest and best loved white man in the United States were to announce himself as in favor of social equality he would at once lose caste and there are places in this country where his life would be in danger. If a Negro were to make verbal insistence on social equality anywhere south of the Mason and Dixon line he would be lynched.

The influence of this term has sent representatives and senators to Washington, has elected governors and has inspired and promulgated class legislation of the most discriminatory type. It is the gaunt specter which haunts the consciousness of the white people of America—warping their judgment, blinding their vision, nullifying their religion, polluting their ethics, dwarfing their sense of justice, stultifying their ideals and shutting out from their tragic gaze the light of love, harmony and truth.

What is social equality? One would think that a term having so much power in our social life easily would be defined. But not so! When you try to define social equality you find that it escapes the utmost mental concentration—it is as elusive as the evanescent cloud shapes that play over the landscape on a summer day. It is not the same thing in any two places or in any two minds. It is the vaguest sort of an idea; it has no clear force; it is wholly lacking definiteness, precision and homogeneity.

Strange to say, such definition as you are able to extract from any person is wholly inconsistent with the circumstances to which the term is applied. I have asked a great many white persons to define social equality. A summing up of those definitions would be about as follows: "Social equality is that status in which Negroes would be received on terms of intimacy and friendship in white homes, and permitted to eat at the table in those homes with white persons."

Now, as has been said, while that is the definition usually given, it is the definition which never is applied. It is plain to be seen that under that definition the white people of the United States surely have no need to fear. Negro "domination" through social equality. There is no way possible for Negroes to force their way into white homes on terms of intimacy and friendship, and take seats at the tables of white persons. There is no case on record where any Negro ever attempted to do such a thing. No Negro has ever contemplated that. Negroes are well satisfied to eat in their own homes; and I do not believe there is a Negro on earth who would desire in the least to eat with white persons in their homes. Does any white person seriously believe that the menace of Negroes forcing themselves into his home and eating at his table is so great that "Jim Crow" laws, economic restrictions, violent race hatreds, class legislation and frequent bitter denunciation of Negroes as desiring social equality are necessary? No one in his right mind and capable of the slightest analysis by any possibility could believe such a thing!

The practical application of the term social equality never has anything to do with the above definition. If I were to apply for a job as conductor on a local street car I would be refused and the ultimate grounds of the refusal would be social equality. In fact there are some fifty-six occupations in the United States a white man may pursue, which I may not pursue, however competent I may be, and in no way involving entrance to a white man's home and eating at his table. Yet the ground of denial always is the same, social equality. If I desire to move out of the slum districts—out

where the streets are well kept and the surroundings clean and wholesome—if I do that, my home is dynamited! Why? Social equality! The fact that I do not desire to affiliate with my white neighbors in any way, or even speak to them, does not modify the verdict. The assumption is that I am trying to force social equality.

In some places it is social equality to sit beside a white person on the street or railway car—and in Kansas City it is social equality to sit in certain parts of the theater. In some places it is social equality for a Negro to enter the public library, while in Kansas City it would be social equality to enter certain churches. Yet not any of those things pertain in any way to entering a white man's home and eating at his table.

Are the white people dishonest in the definition they usually give of social equality? Or have they merely fallen into the habit of using a term whose meaning and application they have not taken trouble to analyze and define? Certain it is that the term as applied has no clear and stable definition. It is made to do duty on any occasion where a Negro seeks to rise above that condition or status of economic and political serfdom, which the nonethical and undisciplined consciousness of the American people have sensed acutely as being "his place." The term is indissolubly interwoven with the instinctive emotions, and by having no foundation in either reason or ethics, does not yield itself to logical definition.

WILLIAM E. GRIFFIN.
4325 Pennsylvania Avenue.

"Race Is Greater Than Law"

The Senators from Nebraska not having risen to defend lynch law, Senator John Sharp Williams, of Mississippi, whose knowledge of his own state should make him an expert on the subject, appeared as advocate for the Omaha mob. We quote a striking bit from his remarks:

"Race is greater than law now and then, and protection of women transcends all law, human and divine."

This is a variation of the excuse given by the lawless everywhere. The bolshevist pleads that his might is greater than the law; and he appears in a better light than Mr. Williams because bolshevism first goes through the process of savagely demolishing the law.

The exponent of sabotage cries out that his passion to subvert industry is greater than the law and he proceeds along the lines laid down in William Z. Foster's red book. He paraphrases the senior Senator from Mississippi by remarking that syndicalism transcends all law, whether human or divine.

Perhaps half the criminals who kill or steal believe that their particular causes are greater than the law; but the law itself, representing the majority of the people, sends the criminal to prison. There he has an opportunity to explain his social views to his fellow prisoners. But no reporter for the Congressional Record is at hand to note down his statement.

A foreigner unfamiliar with his country might take it, from Senator Williams' remark about the protection of women, that our laws were designed to prevent them from being protected. The fact is, of course, that the state of Nebraska has been free to impose the death penalty for the unpardonable crime. Its people, however, set the maximum punishment at twenty years. In Mr. Williams' own state death may be the penalty, yet there have been cases where the Mississippi criminal, after having been legally condemned to death, has been taken by the mob and lynched.

It is not the initial crime that is at issue, particularly when the people may inflict death lawfully if they vote to do so. It is the crime of the mob; and the mob kills, not to avenge a wrong but to vent its blood lust. The worst individual in Omaha on Sunday was the Negro assailant, Brown. The best individual was Smith, the mayor.

who tried to fulfill the letter and spirit of his oath. But the mob applied its blind and cowardly rage alike to both of these men!

"Race is greater than law now and then." It is curious that these words should come from a supporter of the Wilson covenant. Suppose that the league should become a fact, and that some day one of its members, say a great Oriental nation, should rise in new found strength, blazing with a racial pride that had smoldered for centuries, and say to the council: "International law is all very well at times, but in the words of John Sharp Williams, 'race is greater than law now and then!'" On that day, if Mr. Williams were alive, what could he say?—New York Sun.

PROMINENT EDUCATOR DIES

Oberlin.—With the passing of William Mitchell, age 82, who died recently, Oberlin has lost one of its first citizens. For fifty years he had been actively engaged in business here. His home, only a few blocks from the college campus, was the temporary residence of many students who came here from distant cities. The funeral, held from the First Presbyterian church, was one of the largest ever seen in this city. Mrs. Mitchell had been ill for over a year suffering from injuries sustained when he fell from his bicycle. He had been unable to walk since the accident. He is survived by a wife, Mrs. Edith Mitchell, two sons and two daughters.

FOURTH ANNUAL SESSION NATIONAL RACE CONGRESS

(Continued from Page One)

lessly when I say they are of moment as to well nigh disturb the confidence with which this great nation of ours has marched forward in the progress of civilization and the triumph of democracy. Even as I utter these words, my mind runs back to a few days since, when mob violence in the proud city of Omaha, so far despised the law and its chief executive and its temple of administration that it despoiled and burned and attempted to destroy them.

It is to the correction and prevention of such conditions as those that this congress directs its deliberations and its resources.

President Jernagin then gave the origin and aims of the National Race Congress: How the congress is governed; the policies; stating barbarities must cease; we must "carry" on the work of our heroes; a statement of his trip abroad under the headings: My Voyage; Landing on the Continent; My Activities in France; Impressions; My Return and Recommendations.

The Value of Our Press.

I especially want to commend to you the splendid services of the Negro press of this country, which so clearly, fearlessly and persistently gives to us the truth which but for it would slumber in keeping or be hidden out of sight in the hate of our enemies.

In the development of this organ and the arm of defense, God has surely raised up a set of men who are worthy followers of the first champion of our liberties, men who spoke for us when we had no voice of our own. The Negro press deserves your greater continued support. As you regard your liberty, preserve the spirit and freedom of the press.

A strong memorial was prepared and presented to the congress of the United States which will appear later.

Executive Secretary's Report.

The report of Executive Secretary John R. Hawkins was complete in every detail, showing the amount of funds collected from every fraternal association in this city and the amount, also money received from other sources. Secretary Hawkins deserves high praise for his splendid report to the congress which included a number of recommendations all of which were adopted by the congress. Among those who delivered ad-

resses were Mrs. Mary Church Terrell, who gave a very interesting story of her trip with a party of twelve to the International Congress of Women held in Switzerland.

The Rev. H. N. Jetter, R. I., on "Migration of the Colored People and Our Duty to It." The Rev. W. F. Graham, Philadelphia, Pa., on "Political Training," and the "Present Need of the American Negro and How We Can Secure It."

Illustrated lecture by Mr. Edward L. Snyder, Philadelphia, Pa., "Our Soldiers in France."

Lawyer William Harrison, Chicago; Mr. John Mitchell, Jr., of Richmond, Va., Mr. John W. Lewis of Washington, D. C.

The Pittsburgh delegation was the largest in attendance from any city or state among them being: The Rev. P. A. Scott, Rev. O. S. Sims, Rev. J. C. Austin, Rev. J. H. Burks, Rev. J. D. Bushell, the great chorister who led the singing; Mr S. A. Davenport, P. J. Clyde Randall, Esq., attorney at law, and Mr. Robert L. Vann, editor The Pittsburgh Courier.

The greatest gathering of men and women from the states in the history of Washington came to a close after a most harmonious session of four days. Every man and woman representing their constituents had his day in court, and all left the city believing they had accomplished a great good for humanity.

The following officers were elected: Rev. W. H. Jernagin, president, Washington, D. C.; Bishop I. N. Ross, vice-president, Washington, D. C.; Rev. C. H. Stepteanu, recording secretary, Baltimore, Md.; Rev. W. A. Taylor, corresponding secretary, Washington, D. C.; J. R. Hawkins, executive secretary, Bureau of Information and Defense Fund. Rev. W. H. Dean, treasurer, Washington, D. C.; Rev. E. A. P. Chek, chaplain, Newark, N. J.; Rev. J. G. Austin, national organizer, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Mr. J. J. Nickerson, sergeant-at-arms, Hinton, W. Va.; Mr. William Harrison, national lecturer, Chicago, Ill.; Rev. J. Milton Waldron, secretary Haitian committee; musical director, J. D. Bushnell of Pittsburgh, Pa.

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