

## The Commoner.

can afford to permit any portion of its population to remain ignorant or to become imbruted. The whites, for their own welfare as well as for the good of the negroes, must see to it that the free school is open to every child, white and black.

The negro has already made great progress in intellectual development, and this, too, largely through the aid of the white people of the south. The former slave-owners have at their own expense been educating the former slaves, while the more partisan republicans, some of them holding office by the aid of negro votes, have been inciting the negro to oppose everything advocated by the southern whites, regardless of the merits of the proposition under consideration.

The political rights of the negro have for a quarter of a century been the subject of public discussion.

The republican party did not urge emancipation in the beginning; Lincoln, the head of that party, expressly declared that he had no intention of interfering with slavery in the states in which it then existed, but emancipation followed as a result of the war and now no one in all the land would advocate a reinstatement of the system of slavery.

The franchise was conferred upon the negro soon after the war by the republican party, but during the past few years that party has shown less and less interest in the political status of the colored man.

In some of the southern states educational qualifications have been prescribed with a view to securing white supremacy in the state and local governments.

While universal suffrage is the ideal condition toward which the world is moving, and while it is a matter to be regretted that even educational qualifications are ever found necessary, it must be admitted that such qualifications have been prescribed and are still in existence in some northern as well as in some southern states.

These qualifications are defended, where they exist, not on the ground that the Declaration of Independence is wrong, not on the ground that all men are not created equal or that they are not endowed with inalienable rights, nor yet on the ground that governments do not derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, but upon the theory that, when races of different degrees of civilization are thrown together and must necessarily live together under the same government—when, in other words, it is simply a question as to which race shall exert a controlling influence—then the more advanced race has always exercised the right to impose conditions upon those less advanced.

Every race is capable of self-government—it would be an insult to the Creator to assume that He brought into existence a race of people incapable of self-government and entirely dependent upon some other race for government—but while every race is capable of self-government, a race may not be capable of sharing upon equal terms in the control of a government whose blessings are enjoyed by, and whose burdens are imposed upon, several races differing in their advancement. No argument will justify one race in invading the territory of another race in order to force upon that race an alien government and the evils of a colonial system, but when conditions force the two races to live under the same government in the same country the more advanced race never has consented, and probably never will consent, to be dominated by the less advanced. Whether the conditions in the south are such as to justify the amendments which have been adopted is a question of fact which must be decided upon evidence—not a question of theory which can be settled by those far removed from the conditions which have to be considered.

Northern states imposed qualifications upon white men before any southern state imposed

qualifications upon black men.

It must be remembered that a qualification for suffrage, undesirable as it is, raises a very different question from that presented by a colonial system. In the first place, a suffrage qualification is temporary and those who are excluded today may qualify themselves to vote tomorrow; the condition is not hopeless. Under the colonial system, however, the disqualification is permanent. There are no means provided whereby the subject may become a citizen.

In the second place, the man excluded from suffrage because he cannot meet the requirements of the law lives under the constitution and laws made by the voters for themselves, while the subject under a colonial government lives under laws made by the voters, but not binding upon the voters. Both of these differences are important. The temporary character of the obstacle to suffrage above referred to finds its parallel in the probationary term prescribed for, and the conditions imposed upon, those who seek to be naturalized.

As to the second difference, every thoughtful person knows that the danger of oppressive and unjust legislation is infinitely multiplied when the man who makes the law not only avoids the provisions of the law, but finds a profit in enforcing its provisions against others. This is the foundation of all the crimes committed by empires against their subjects.

The social phase of the negro question has seldom been discussed for the reason that no man or party has advocated social equality between the white man and the black man. McClure, Phillips & Co. have recently published a little volume entitled "Abraham Lincoln, His Book, a facsimile reproduction of the original with an explanatory note by J. McCan Davis." This is a book prepared by Abraham Lincoln himself for the use of Captain Jas. N. Brown, of Illinois, a candidate for the state legislature in 1858. Mr. Brown was confronted with the charge that Mr. Lincoln, whom Mr. Brown was supporting for the United States senate, was in favor of "negro equality." In order that Mr. Brown might answer his critics, Mr. Lincoln made a collection of his own utterances on the subject, and on the first page wrote: "The following extracts are taken from various speeches of mine delivered at various times and places and I believe that they contain the substance of all I have said about 'negro equality.'" The sixth extract quoted in this remarkable little volume contains the following:

Now, gentlemen, I don't want to read at any greater length, but this is the true complexion of all I have ever said in regard to the institution of slavery and the black race. This is the whole of it, and anything that argues me into this idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro, is but a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse chestnut to be a chestnut horse. (Laughter.) I will say here, while upon this subject, that I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and have no inclination to do so. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary, but I hold that notwithstanding all this there is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence, the right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. (Loud cheers.)

The above quotation selected by Mr. Lincoln himself from one of his own speeches for the purpose of answering the criticism of his political op-

ponents, sets forth the great emancipator's views on three of the four phases of the negro question. He believed that the negro was equal to the white man in the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence and he believed that it was the duty of the government to protect him in the enjoyment of these rights. He opposed slavery, believing it to be wrong in principle, although he expressly declared that he had no intention of interfering with slavery in the states in which it then existed.

Second, he recognized the distinction between political rights and natural rights, and exhibited that partiality toward his own race which is inherent to every one.

Third, he recognized the fact that social equality is not necessary to the protection of the negro in the enjoyment of all his natural rights. Mr. Roosevelt will not find, therefore, in the life or words of Lincoln anything to justify him in advocating social equality, if his act can be construed as representing his views on this subject.

The natural rights of all are the same, and it is the province of government to protect these natural and inalienable rights—rights which were vested in man by the Creator, rights which cannot be taken from him without rendering his life valueless to him and to his fellows. But man chooses his society for himself. It is as much a matter of taste as the selection of a husband or a wife. It is no cause for offense to any man that you prefer to associate with someone else; it depends upon your character and virtues whether the preference is a compliment to or a reflection upon him, but in either case you have a right to choose congenial companions and in doing so you are not only within your rights, but you are doing what every one does. Those who love books enjoy each other's company, although some may be very rich and some very poor. The rich may enjoy each other's company although some are ignorant and some are intellectual. People are drawn together by family ties, by church relations, by neighborhood associations and in a multitude of other ways. Usually social lines are invisible ones, but they are everywhere recognized. They are no more inconsistent with universal brotherhood than are family ties or national obligations. The families of a community are separate and distinct; each is engaged in its work and each decides how far it will share its confidence and its companionship with the families about it, but this does not prevent the recognition of the right of all families to equal consideration and protection at the hands of the government, nor does it prevent the exercise of charity, mercy and benevolence. The various nations are but groups of families associated together for mutual protection and benefit. The fact that each nation has customs, institutions and laws peculiar to itself, does not prevent its recognition of those natural rights which are broader and deeper than national boundaries.

So, the members of a race are bound together by sympathies and sentiments which are both natural and permanent. Those who oppose social equality between the white man and the negro do so on the ground that they do not believe that the amalgamation of the two races is desirable. They think it better for the white man to work out the problems of his race while the black man is working out the problems of his race. There can be co-operation and helpfulness without intermarriage. Each race can recognize the natural rights of the other and both can contribute as far as is within their power, to the strength and development of the nation. The advocacy of social equality will tend to throw the white and the black races into greater antagonism and conflict rather than to bring them together, and the wiser members of the negro race know this.

President Roosevelt doubtless recognizes, as all well informed men do, the great service which Mr. Washington has rendered to the members of his race. He is not the only colored man who deserves great credit, but he is probably its most conspicuous member of the present generation.