

CHAPTER XVII

SEVEN PERILS OF HUMANITY—NUMBER SIX.

THE BLACK PERIL

IN that darkest stoke-hole of the good ship *Earth*, called Africa, live nearly 200,000,000 of her 1,600,000,000 passengers—about one-eighth of the total list. Not all of these belong to the black race, but most of them do. And scattered over the world are many millions more of negro or negroid peoples. They tinge much of South America with black. They dominate the island of Hayti. They are struggling for the dominion of Cuba.

And they exist as a part of this great nation of ours in the proportion of one in every nine—or even a greater proportion. So many fellow men of such a marked type would constitute a problem on any ship—and they are a problem on the good ship *Earth*. To us of the United States they are so much of a

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problem that I am conscious as I write this that many thousands of negroes will read these very words, and that what I shall say here will in one way or another, greatly or slightly affect this problem.

The black race constitutes, not only a world problem, but a world peril. It is a race of strong people. It is a race of brave people.

It is a race capable of great evil and great good. It is now rapidly passing under the rule of the Mohammedan faith and because that faith is one of armies and of conversion by the sword, and of a possible holy war, the fact that the negro is a brave soldier and prone to religious fanaticism makes the black race a part of the great Mohammedan world peril. In this the negro is a brother to the Hindu.

But the negro is a world peril because of the fact that he is a temptation to other races. He has of all races the greatest plasticity and the least power of racial resistance to force. This threatens to make him a weapon in the hand of Islam.

The black peril consists largely in the

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negro's capacity for enslavement. He breeds and flourishes in captivity. In the days of chattel slavery he was the most submissive of chattels—the only race the slaves of which enriched their masters and multiplied in numbers under conditions of servitude.

In these days of industrial slavery the negro still plays his ancient rôle in slavery which is damning to himself and his enslavers alike. He serves in the Kongo basin in rubber and ivory. He slaves in South Africa in the mines and on the cattle ranches. If he had been like the gorilla of his own forests—incapable of subjugation, willing to die rather than serve, ready to strike down his master with the first blade placed in his hands as a tool, a grim free fighter to the last—it would have been better for the world. But the negro is affectionate, yielding, happy even in slavery, a good servant, true to the interests of those having dominion over him—and he has been, and is, the temptation and the ruin of those who have taken him in their toils.

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The black peril has been thought peculiarly an American question, but it is not. It is a South African question, a German question, a Belgian question, a Canadian question, a world question.

In the United States it has been our greatest question since the constitution was adopted recognizing slavery without mentioning it. The black peril made labor disgraceful in half of the United States and cursed the poor whites and the rich whites. It was, of course, an economic question—slavery and exploitation always are. But out of the problem of the competition of the submissive black and the poor white for the labor offered by the rich white—a problem as acute now as in 1860—grows another problem and peril—the darkest phase of the black peril to humanity. This is the sex phase of the problem.

This we ordinarily refuse to discuss in a public way, or we talk in generalities against race admixture, or we criminally allow Judge Lynch to blazon terror to the negro. The

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question ought to be discussed in the open field of thought. It is the biggest part of the race problem.

In a splendid address to the world a negro congress once said in effect this: "The white race through slavery gave us the precious blessing of the Christian faith, but it robbed us of the virtue of our women!" Without admitting its general applicability, I accept this admission as racially true. The white man does not believe in the ability of the negro woman to preserve her sexual integrity against him. To his mind she is not strong enough in will power. Yet he fails to throw about her the protection which other women receive who are of like weakness. He would not use as a harem a hospital for nymphomaniacs, or women of feeble will; yet he seeks negresses to whom his philosophy denies the will power to protect themselves!

Whites where there is a negro problem enact laws against racial intermarriages. They do this in a struggle to protect the purity of

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blood of the white race. I believe in this as a great and splendid struggle. Aside from any question of superiority of one race over the other, I think that the mating of white and black is accomplished only through a biological as well as a moral shock, which is evil. The races are too far apart ethnically to be crossed with sociological success. In a state of perfect freedom, and in the highest development of both races I do not believe there would be any crossing.

But how does the white man live up to his ideal regarding such unions? William Archer, the British writer, says in effect: "The presence in the community of large numbers of physically well-developed women of an inferior race places an unfair strain upon the virtue of the white man." But unions repugnant to racial purity should constitute no "unfair strain." If white men believe their own talk about the crime of miscegenation they should look upon it as they look upon incest—as a crime against the race, tempting

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to the pervert only. In old civilizations the marriage of brothers and sisters was common. Then the presence in the same family of the sisters may have been pronounced an "unfair strain" by some Egyptian Archer. But with the advent of a better civilization comes that finest thing in the world, the family circle. The temptation has departed, driven out by better ethics and purer love.

If the negro woman can not take care of herself the white man is bound to protect her as he protects other defectives. He should be condemned for rape if he sins herein. If the integrity of the white race is at stake in the matter the white man who sins is guilty of a crime like incest and should be punished accordingly. Let the white women of the lands of mixed population demand a higher ethics from their men. Let the white men do likewise for themselves. To claim superiority is not enough—the white race can prove superiority in only one way—by being superior.

The black peril may be turned aside by economic freedom for all, by justice to all, by

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the taking up by the white man of the real white man's burden—that of really living up to his claims. Until these things are done, and pending some great racial uplift in the negro race, the black peril will hang like a cloud over the broad decks of the good ship *Earth*.