

## Georgia: Invisible Empire State

By W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS

Georgia is beautiful. High on the crests of the Great Smoky Mountains some Almighty hand shook out this wide and silken shawl -shook it and swung it two hundred glistening miles from the Savannah to the Chattahoochee, four hundred miles from the Appalachians to the Southern Sea. Red, white, and black is the soil and it rolls by six great rivers and ten wide cities and a thousand towns, thick-throated, straggling, low, busy, and sleepy. It is a land singularly full of lovely things; its vari-colored soil; its mighty oaks and pines, its cotton fields, its fruit, its hills.

And yet few speak of the beauty of Georgia. Some tourists wait by the palms of Savannah or try the mild winters of Augusta; and there are those who, rushing through the town on its many railroads, glance at Atlanta, or attend a convention there. Lovers of the mountains of Tennessee may skirt the mountains of Georgia; but Georgia connotes to most men national supremacy in cotton and lynching, Southern supremacy in finance and industry and the Ku Klux Klan.

Now all this is perfectly logical and natural. Georgia does not belong to this nation by history or present deed. It is a spiritual borderland lying in the shadows between Virginia and Carolina on the one hand, Louisiana on the other, and the great North on

the last. It is a land born to freedom from a jail delivery of the unfortunate, which insisted passionately upon slavery and gave poor old Oglethorpe and the London proprietors many a bad night because they tried to prohibit rum and slaves. But Georgia was firm and insisted: "In spite of all Endeavours to disguise this point, it is as clear as Light itself, that Negroes are as essentially necessary to the Cultivation of Georgia, as Axes, Hoes, or any other Utensil of Agriculture." Georgia had her way and this accounts for Georgia.

Georgia has always had a very clear idea of what she wanted. Of course, Savannah and Augusta with their old names and families loved and imitated the grand air of the slave barons, claimed cousinship to Charleston and looked down upon the "red necks" of the rest of the State. But Savannah and Augusta are not all Georgia. Georgia was originally a sweep of black land, twenty thousand square miles where the cotton kingdom laid its new foundations, gliding down from Virginia; and Georgia determined to make money and be rich. She fought every interference. To Georgia the Civil War was a matter of interference with the slavery that underlay this kingdom and according to that great Georgian, Alexander H. Stephens, vice president of the Confederacy, Georgia proposed to establish a new government whose "corner stone rests upon the great truth, that the Negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and normal condition."

The sweep of the cotton kingdom drove the listless, the poor and the unlucky back to the hills above and around Atlanta and kept oncoming hill-men from

descending; while below Macon the great plantation system spread. Away to the south and west stretches this black land -the ancient seat of the Cotton Kingdom, the granary of the Confederacy. Swamp and twisted oak and mile on mile of cotton are neighbored by the new pecans, tobacco and peanuts. Below and to the left Brunswick and Darien sleep and decay, beside the waters that look on the Caribbean. Below and to the right the massive flood of Chattahoochee parades to the Gulf with muffled music.

When catastrophe came, Georgia was among the first to see a way out. While other States were seeking two impossible and incompatible things, the subjection of the blacks and defiance of the North, Georgia developed a method of her own. With slavery gone the slave baron was bankrupt and two heirs to his power had rushed forward: The poor white from the hills around and above Atlanta and the Northern speculator -"Scalawag" and "Carpet-bagger" they were dubbed -sought to rebuild the South. In the more purely agricultural regions this involved a mere substitution of owners and black laborers. But the development of Georgia was to be more than agricultural. It was to be manufacturing and mining; transportation, commerce, and finance; and it was to involve both white and colored labor. This was a difficult and delicate task, but there were Georgians who foresaw the way long before the nation realized it. The first prophet of the new day was Henry W. Grady of Atlanta. Grady's statue stands in Atlanta in the thick of traffic, ugly, dirty, but strong and solid. He had Irish wit, Southern fire and the flowers of oratory. He was among the first to incarnate the "Black

Mammy" and he spoke in three years three pregnant sentences: In New York in 1886 he made a speech on the "New South" that made him and the phrase famous. He said: "There was a South of slavery and secession. That South is dead." The North applauded wildly. In Augusta, in 1887, he added: "In her industrial growth the South is daily making new friends. Every dollar of Northern money invested in the South gives us a new friend in that section." The South looked North for capital and advertised her industrial possibilities, and finally he said frankly in Boston in 1889: "When will the black man cast a free ballot? When the Northern laborer casts a vote uninfluenced by his employer."

In other words, Grady said to Northern Capital: Come South and make enormous profits; and to Southern captains of industry: Attract Northern capital by making profit possible. Together these two classes were to unite and exploit the South; and they were to make Georgia not simply an industrial center, but what was much more profitable, a center for financing Southern enterprises; and they would furnish industry with labor that could be depended on.

This last point, dependable labor, was the great thing. Here was a vast submerged class, the like or equivalent of which was unknown in the North. Here were a half million brawny Negro workers and a half million poor whites. If they could be kept submerged -hard at work in industry and agriculture -they would raise cotton, make cotton cloth, do any number of other valuable things, and build a "prosperous" State. If they joined forces and went into politics to better their common lot they would speedily

emancipate themselves. How was this to be obviated? How were both sets of laborers to be inspired to work hard and continuously? The modus operandi was worked out slowly, but it was done skillfully and brought results. These results have been costly but they have made Georgia a rich land growing daily richer. The new wealth was most unevenly distributed; it piled itself in certain quarters and particularly in Atlanta -birthplace and capital of the new "Invisible Empire."

The method used to accomplish all this was in addition to much thrift and work, deliberately to encourage race hatred between the mass of white people and mass of Negroes. This was easy to develop because the two were thrown into economic competition in brick-laying, carpentry, and all kinds of mechanical work connected with the new industries. In such work Negroes and whites were personal, face-to-face competitors, bidding for the same jobs, working or willing to work in the same places. The Negroes started with certain advantages. They were mechanics of

the period before the war. The whites came with one tremendous advantage, the power to vote. I remember a campaign in Atlanta. The defeated candidate's fate was sealed by a small circular. It contained a picture of colored carpenters building his house.

This doctrine of the economic utility of race hate is never stated as a fact in Georgia or in the South. It is here that the secrecy of the economic empire of Georgia enters. Two other facts are continually stated. The first is the eternal subordination and inequality of the Negro. The second is the efficiency and

necessity of Negro labor, provided the subjection of the Negro is maintained.

Hoke Smith in his memorable campaign in Georgia in 1906 almost repeated Stephens of 45 years earlier:

"I believe the wise course is to plant ourselves squarely upon the proposition in Georgia that the Negro is in no respect the equal of the white man, and that he cannot in the future in this State occupy a position of equality."

A white labor leader, secretary of the Brotherhood of Timber Workers, wrote about the same time:

"The next cry raised by the bosses and their stool pigeons is the 'Negro question,' and so we are often asked how will the Brotherhood handle the Negro and the white men in the same organization? Answer: How do the capitalists or employers handle them? To the employer a working man is nothing but a profit-producing animal and he doesn't care a snap of his finger what the animal's color is -white, black, red, brown, or yellow; native or foreign born; religious or unreligious -so long as he (the worker) has strength enough to keep the logs coming and the lumber going -that is all the bosses want or ask. It is only when they see the slaves uniting, when all other efforts to divide the workers on the job have failed, that we hear a howl go up as to the horrors of 'social equality.' Not until then do we really know how sacred to the boss and his hirelings is the holy doctrine of 'white supremacy.'"

On the other hand, once the laborers are thrown into hating, fearing, despising, competing groups, the employers are at rest. As one firm said, comparing its

black labor with white: "Do the same work, and obey better; more profit, less trouble."

In agriculture poor whites and Negroes were soon brought into another sort of indirect competition. The Negroes worked in the fields, the poor whites in the towns which were the market places for the fields. Gradually, the poor whites became not simply the mechanics but the small store keepers. They financed the plantations and fleeced the workers. They organized to keep the workers "in their places" to keep them from running away, to keep them from striking, to keep their wages down, to terrorize them with mobs. On the other hand the Negroes worked to own land, to escape from country to city, to cheat the merchants, to cheat the land holders.

Then in larger ways and more indirectly both groups of workers came into competition. They became separated according to different, but supporting and inter-locked, industries and occupations. Negroes prepared the road bed for the railroads; whites ran the trains. Negroes were firemen; whites were engineers; Negroes were porters; whites were mill operatives. Finally there was the Negro servant stretching all the way from the great mansion to the white factory hand's hovel, touching white life at every point.

In order to secure output and profits, the one essential was to bring race hatred and economic competition into such juxtaposition that they looked like two sides of the same thing. This is what Georgia did and did first. She did it so successfully that the whole South has followed her although few other States have been so clear and single-minded. It was not by accident that Booker Washington made his speech advocating

industrial peace between the races at Atlanta. Northern philanthropy offered industrial training to Negroes free as the price of disfranchisement. Southern industry offered the Negro protection and a chance to work as a condition of giving up agitation for civil and political rights. And both offered the white man a chance to work and to vote as long as he did not try to push wages so high that the Negro would "naturally" supplant him in industry.

Soon the subtle rivalry of races in industry began. Soon, to the ordinary Georgia white man, the Negro became a person trying to take away his job, personally degrade him, and shame him in the eyes of his fellows; starve him secretly. To the ordinary Georgia Negro, the average white man was a person trying to take away his job, starve him, degrade him, keep him in ignorance, and return him to slavery. And these two attitudes did not spring from careful reasoning. They were so coiled and hidden with old known and half-known facts that they became matters of instinct and inheritance. You could not argue about them; you could not give or extract information.

It is usual for the stranger in Georgia to think of race prejudice and race hatred as being the great, the central, the inalterable fact and to go off into general considerations as to race differences and the eternal likes and dislikes of mankind. But that line leads one astray. The central thing is not race hatred in Georgia; it is successful industry and commercial investment in race hatred for the purpose of profit. All the time behind the scenes in whispered tones and in secret conference, Georgia is feeding the flame of race hatred with economic fuel. And while this is not the

conscious and deliberate action of all, it is so with some and sub-conscious with many others.

Skillfully, but with extraordinary ease, the power to strike was gradually taken from both white and black labor. First the white labor vote was used to disfranchise Negroes and the threat of white competition backed by the hovering terror of the white mob made a strike of black workers on any scale absolutely unheard of in Georgia. Continually this disfranchisement went beyond politics into industry and civil life. On the other hand, the power of a mass of cheap black labor to underbid almost any class of white laborers forced white labor to moderate its demands to the minimum and to attempt organization slowly and effectively only in occupations where Negro competition was least, as in the cotton mills.

Then followed the curious and paradoxical semidisfranchisement of white labor by means of the "White Primary." By agreeing to vote on one issue, the Negro, the normal spit of the white vote on other questions or the development of a popular movement against entrenched privilege is virtually forestalled. Thus in Georgia, democratic government and real political life have disappeared. None of the great questions that agitate the nation -international or national, social or economic, can come up for free discussion. Anything that would divide white folk in opinion or action is taboo and only personal feuds survive as the issues of political campaigns.

If real issues ever creep in and real difference of opinion appears -"To your tents, O Israel" -"Do you want your sister to marry a nigger?"

What induces white labor to place so low a value

on its own freedom and true well-being and so high a value on race hatred? The answer involves certain psychological subtleties and yet it is fairly clear. Wages and prosperity are in the last analysis spiritual satisfactions. The Southern white laborer gets low wages measured in food, clothes, shelter, and the education of his children. But in one respect he gets high pay and that is in the shape of the subtlest form of human flattery, social superiority over masses of other human beings.

Georgia bribes its white labor by giving it public badges of superiority. The Jim Crow legislation was not to brand the Negro as inferior and to separate the races, but rather to flatter white labor to accept public testimony of its superiority instead of higher wages and social legislation. He was made ostensibly the equal of the highest. He could not only follow the old aristocrats into the front entrance of railway stations; and go with them to the best theaters and movies; but in all places and occasions he could sit above and apart from "niggers." He had a right to the title of "Mister" and "Mrs." He could enter street cars at either end and sit where he pleased or at least in front of blacks; he could ride in the best railway coaches and at his leisure saunter among the Negroes herded in the smoker next the hot and dirty engine. He could sit in "public" parks and enter "public" libraries where no Negro could enter; he need seldom fear to get the worst of a street altercation, or to lose a court case against a Negro. He could often demand that a Negro uncover in his presence and yield him precedence on the pavement and in the store.

He grew to love those proofs of superiority. He

*and*

The very striving of the Negroes strengthens this white labor attitude. All Negroes cannot be kept down. They escape, they rise; they steal education, they save money; they push and struggle up. The very success of the successful fastens the grip of the profit makers. "See," they whisper, as the black automobile, the new black home, the black and well-clothed family appear - "See! This is what threatens white labor -they're climbing on you -they're climbing over you -beware!" Not negro poverty, crime and degradation, but Negro wealth, ability and ambition is the great incentive to the white mob.

In return for this empty and dangerous social bribery the white laborer fared badly. Of modern social legislation he got almost nothing; the "age of consent" for girls in Georgia was ten years until 1918 when it was, by great effort and outside pressure, raised to fourteen. Child labor has few effective limitations; children of twelve may work in factories, and without birth registration the age is ascertainable with great difficulty. For persons "under twenty-one" the legal work day is still "from sunrise to sunset" and recently

Georgia has become the first State in the Union to reject the proposed Federal child labor amendment. Education is improving, but still the white people of Georgia are one of the most ignorant groups of the union and the so-called compulsory education law is so full of loopholes as to be unenforceable. And black Georgia? In Atlanta there are twelve thousand Negro children in school and six thousand seats in the school rooms! In all legislation tending to limit profits and curb the exploitation of labor Georgia lingers far behind the nation.

This effort to keep the white group solid led directly to mob law. Every white man became a recognized official to keep Negroes "in their places." Negro baiting and even lynching became a form of amusement which the authorities dared not stop. Blood lust grew by what it fed on.

Again and again the mob got out and demonstrated its "superiority" by beating and murder. These outbreaks must be curbed for they affected profits, but they could not be suppressed for they kept certain classes of white labor busy and entertained. Secret government and manipulation ensued. Secret societies guided the State and administration. The Ku Klux Klan was quite naturally reborn in Georgia and Atlanta.

Another method of surrendering to the mob was the extraordinary yielding to local rule. County after county has been erected by the legislature as a corporate center of local government, until today Georgia is not one State -it is one hundred and sixty-six independent counties, counties so independent that if anarchy wishes to stalk in Wilcox County, Fulton County has little more power than a foreign State.

The independence and self-rule of these little bits of territory are astounding. They lay taxes, they spend monies, they have partial charge of education and public improvements, and through their dominating power in the legislature they make laws. Only when they touch corporate property, industrial privilege, and labor legislation are the reserve forces of capital and politics mobilized to curb them. In the law and administration of personal relations they are supreme. This decentralization increases year by year.

Georgia is beautiful. Yet on its beauty rests something disturbing and strange. Physically this is a certain emptiness and monotony, a slumberous, vague dilapidation, a repetition, an unrestraint. Point by point one could pick a poignant beauty -one golden river, one rolling hill, one forest of oaks and pines, one Bull Street. But there is curious and meaningless repetition until the beauty palls or fails of understanding. And on this physical strangeness, dissatisfaction, drops a spiritual gloom. A certain brooding lies on the land -there is something furtive, uncanny -at times almost a horror. Some folk it so grips that they never see the beauty - the hills to them are haunts of grim and terrible men; the plantations are homes of things that cringe and scream and all the world goes armed with loaded pistols to the hip; concealed, but ready -always ready.

There is a certain secrecy about this world. Nobody seems wholly frank -neither white nor black; neither child, woman, nor man. Strangers ask each other pointed, searching questions. "What is your name?" "Where are you going?" "What might be

your business?" And they eye you speculatively. Once satisfied, the response is disconcertingly quick. They strip their souls naked before you; there is sudden friendship and lavish hospitality. And yet -yet behind all are the grim bars and barriers; subjects that must not be touched, opinions that must not be questioned. Side by side with that warm human quality called "Southern" stands the grim fact that right here and beside you, laughing easily with you and shaking your hand cordially are men who hunt men: who hunt and kill in packs, at odds of a hundred to one, under cover of night. They have lynched five hundred Negroes in forty years; they have killed unnumbered white men. There must be living and breathing in Georgia today at least ten thousand men who have taken human life, and ten times that number who have connived at it.

Let us look this human thing squarely in the face without flinching. Georgia has wrought deeds so awful that they can scarcely be told. Down yonder we may go of a silent day, slipping through slim forests, by secret pools and black and silent waters. We cross a gold brown river shining like a colored girl's cheek, placid beneath the trees. There the moss triumphs, grips and glares on dead trees that wave their corpses to the bare air; gray cabins crouch beneath the oaks with chimneys of golden clay. Slow indolent towns appear wide, low, long, straggling; and

plowed fields, gray and yellow. The towns change from clustered homes to towns of stores, lines of shops leaning against each other. We come to Valdosta, a lank, hot town spread on yellow sand. Near here in 1918, a white farmer was murdered. The murderer was never found, but six or more Negroes were lynched for suspected complicity. The wife of one of these last, Mary Turner, went weeping down the road with an eight months child in her womb. And as she walked she cried that if she learned the names of that mob she would tell -she would tell. The mob heard and came. They tied her ankles together. They hanged her, head down, to a tree. They took gas and oil from the motor cars round about (they were not the riff-raff, they owned motor cars) and poured it over her and set her afire. They howled as she writhed in flame; and one man rushed forward with a hog knife and slit open her stomach and the unborn child dropped to the ground.

I look around upon these people of Georgia. They are human and commonplace -not gods or devils. They are the same sort of folk all the world is made of. Here is a white man in overalls, truculent but kind; a scrawny young "red neck" chewing, ignorant but not essentially bad; there is the tired, worried white woman sitting on her porch, with care and yearning in her face; her daughter is white and gold and beautiful and idle. Here is a colored washer-woman with great feet and misshapen hands and the eyes of God's mother. Here is the man of the world who knows it all and owns it all. These people are caught in the evil web of the world, just as millions have been caught before. Their struggle to work and live has been complicated by hateful memories and deliberate selfish greed. The natural forces of redeeming human nature which ever strive to unleash the soul from evil -these forces are themselves in leash. What can the forces for uplift and reform do in Georgia?

Of religion as it exists in present-day Georgia one

may well despair. Georgia is already religious to overflowing. Everyone belongs -must belong - to some church, and really to "belong" one should be Presbyterian or Baptist or Methodist. Episcopalians are unusual, Unitarians gravely suspect, Catholics and Jews feared and hated. But all these are within the range of understanding or misunderstanding. The hottest of Hell fire is reserved for any so unspeakable as to hold themselves free-thinkers, agnostics, or atheists. Georgia's religion is orthodox, "fundamental." It deals in Biblical texts and phrases - not in living actualities. It washes its "miserable sinners" in "the blood of the lamb," but the blood of the mob's victim lies silent at its very doors. But outside of the church religion has its uses. When the Ku Klux Klan sent out its official instructions to delegates to the State convention, the Grand Dragon said, "It is the earnest desire of Mr. McAdoo to elect his friend, Mr. John S. Cohen, as National Committeeman. Mr. Cohen is a high-class Christian gentleman, a member of the North Presbyterian Church of Atlanta." No, there is little hope in Georgia religion despite a light here and there.

Nevertheless, there are brave men in Georgia, men and women whose souls are hurt even to death by this merciless and ruthless exploitation of race hatred. But what can they do? It is fairly easy to be a reformer in New York or Boston or Chicago. One can fight there for convictions and while it costs to oppose power, yet it can be done. It even gains some applause and worth-while friends. But in Atlanta? The students of white Emory College recently invited a student of black Morehouse College to lead a Y. M. C. A. meeting. It was a little thing -almost insignificant. But in Georgia it was almost epoch-making. Ten years ago it would have meant riot. Today it called for rare courage. When the Southern Baptists met in Atlanta recently, they did not segregate Negro visitors. Such a thing has seldom if ever happened before in Georgia. It

is precisely the comparative insignificance of these little things that shows the huge horror of the problem -the bitter fight between Georgia in 1924 and civilization.

Some little things a liberal public opinion in Georgia may start to do, although the politico-economic alliance stands like a rock wall in the path of real reform. A determined group called "inter-racial" asks for changes. Most of them would mean by this the stopping of lynching and mobbing, decent wages, the abolition of personal insult based on color. Most of them would not think of demanding the ballot for blacks or the abolition of Jim Crow cars or civil rights in parks, libraries, and theaters or the right of a man to invite his black friend to dinner. Some there are who in their souls would dare all this, but they may not whisper it aloud -it would spoil everything; it would end their crusade. Few of these reformers yet fully envisage the economic nexus, the real enemy encased in enormous profit. They think reform will come by right thinking, by religion, by higher culture, and do not realize that none of these will work their end effectively as long as it pays to exalt and maintain race prejudice.

Of the spiritual dilemmas that face men today I know of none more baffling than that which faces the conscientious, educated, forward-looking white man of Georgia. On the one hand is natural loyalty to what

his fathers believed, to what his friends never question; then his own difficulty in knowing or understanding the black world and his inbred distrust of its ability and real wish; there is his natural faith in his own ability and the ability of his race; there is the subtle and continuous propaganda -gossip, newspapers, books, sermons, and "science"; there is his eager desire to see his section take a proud place in the civilized world. There is his job, his one party, his white primary -his social status so easily lost if he is once dubbed a "nigger lover." Facing all this is lynching, mob murder, ignorance, silly self-praise of people pitifully degenerate in so many cases, exploitation of the poor and weak and insult, insult, insult heaped on the blacks.

Thus Georgia reaps the whirlwind. Yet the Voice, the eternal Voice rises and sings in this Wilderness. The present travesty cannot endure. It is a denial of the fundamental tenets of Christianity, a repudiation of the veriest elementals of fair play and equality of opportunity that one likes to think of as American. Yet it is not from these contradictions but from the economic paradox that change is likely to come.

Suppose a man of the people, that is, of the white people, arose in Georgia and said: "We are being exploited, tremendously and shamelessly. The great mass of workers lack even the primitive protection of modern days such as limited hours of labor, safeguards for women and children in industry and from industry. It is worth while to arouse the workers and get them to vote in better industrial conditions." What would happen?

There was once such a man in Georgia, Tom Watson.

He tried to unite labor. He organized the Populist Party in Georgia and invited the blacks to help. It was a critical situation that developed in the early nineties when it was increasingly difficult to keep the Negro disfranchised illegally and yet not possible to disfranchise him legally. In the first campaign it was easy to beat the Populists by the fraud of "counting them out." Immediately thereafter the captains of industry mobilized. By newspaper, by word of mouth, by lodge communications, it was conveyed to the white workers that not only would Negroes benefit from any attempt to better the present industrial situation, but they would gradually displace the white workers by underbidding them; that any benefits for white workers must come secretly and in such a way that Negroes could not share in the benefits.



Thus immediately the emphasis was put on race discrimination. And this race difference grew and expanded until in most cases the whole knowledge and thought of the workers and voters went to keeping Negroes down, rather than to raising themselves.

Internal dissension in the labor ranks followed. The Negroes were then blamed for not voting solidly with white labor; for selling out to capital; for under-bidding labor. The whole movement swung into intense Negro hatred; and the net result was that the white labor vote was swung completely into a movement finally and completely to disfranchise the Negro labor. The mob shot down Watson's Negro leaders in their tracks and the only way in which he could survive politically was to out-Herod Herod in his diatribes against Negroes and in coining new variants of appeals to prejudice by attacks on Catholics and

Jews. To his death he kept a dangerous political power and even reached the United States Senate, but with his labor party cut in two and forced into additional disfranchisement by the "White Primary," he could never again seriously menace the "machine."

A second way toward emancipation may lie through dissension in the high seats of power. When in Cleveland's day Hoke Smith opposed "free silver" he was read out of Georgia democracy and his path to the United States Senate was blocked. Immediately he espoused the cause of "labor" and made a frontal attack on capital and the great corporations of Georgia. The white labor vote flocked to him and instead of the "White Primary" being the ordinary parade, a bitter internal political fight developed. Smith and his opponents quickly came to terms. In the midst of the campaign Smith dexterously switched his attack on monopoly to an attack on Negroes as the cause of monopoly and since this old game had often been played, he played it harder and more fiercely. He went so far that the State was aroused as never before. Race bitterness seethed, and white labor took the bit into its teeth. It demanded economic disfranchisement of the Negro to follow political. The Negro must be kept from buying land, his education must be curtailed, his occupations limited.

This was overshooting the mark and destroying the whole bi-racial labor situation upon which the Secret Empire of Georgia is based. Quick action was needed. The minds of the mob must be turned again and turned from political and economic thought to pure race hatred. Immediately the sex motif arose to leadership. All subconsciously, sex hovers about race in

Georgia. Every Negro question at times becomes a matter of sex. Voting? They want social equality. Schools? They are after our daughters. Land? They'll rape our wives. Continually the secrecy, the veiled suggestion, the open warning pivots on sex; gossip rages and horrible stories are spread. The ignorant, the superstitious feed on such flame and go mad with anger and hate. There is something horrible in the air that swells at times and bursts. The world goes stark mad.

The Leo Frank case of more recent date was a natural product, if a slight variant, of a soil never weeded of its medieval superstitions and long fertilized with racial hate. Fantastic and lurid tales, a legal lynching, an actual mob murder, the "better people" rushing in their limousines to the undertaker's to view the battered corpse. The chivalric motif present, of course. Georgian manhood had defied Georgia law to avenge a woman, and when the crush of approving and gloating Atlantans became perilous the Mayor of the city himself was on the job to leap to the low roof of the undertaking shop and beseech the crowd "in the fair name of Atlanta" not to "jostle the ladies."

It was a novel experience for the Jews of Georgia and America, and the whole country was shocked. But the Negroes had long been living under the terror. So it had been at the culmination of the Hoke Smith campaign. All restraint was suddenly swept away and submerged in wild stories of rape and murder. Atlanta papers rushed out extra editions each with a new horror afterward proved wholly fictitious or crassly exaggerated. On a Saturday night the white Atlanta laborers arose and murdered every Negro they

could catch in the streets. For three days war and rapine raged -then the streets of the Empire City sank into awful silence. Hoke Smith became Governor and Senator, and the industrial and political system were intact. So, too, ten years later Hugh Dorsey rose to the governorship on the bones of the mob's victim.

The terror under which the Negroes live is no abstract thing. It is no exceptional misfortune that picks an isolated and perhaps not wholly undeserving victim. On the contrary it is the self-respecting, the thrifty, the successful colored man who is its shining target. Their way is thorny as that of no other in this land of ours. Let me refer to one instance based on the published authority of the Governor of Georgia.

A Negro of about sixty years of age had bought ten years ago a farm of one hundred and forty acres and lived there with his wife and twelve children. He had educated three of his daughters who were teaching school. He owned mules, horses, a cow and thirty-five hogs. During the war he bought a thousand dollars worth of Liberty Bonds and the white newspapers praised him. But he lived neighbor to an illiterate white man and the white man grew angry at the colored man's prosperity. A dispute arose over the boundary line and one Saturday when the Negro came to town the marshal arrested him without a warrant, struck him in the face and knocked him down. Other white men rushed at him and choked and beat him. His two daughters started to help him. One was kicked in the stomach and the three, together with a son, were all locked in jail. The girl who had been kicked was deathly sick and lay moaning and begging for medical aid for herself and father, but they were

left locked up all night without attention and ignorant of the charge against them. They were tried in the Superior court and the father was sentenced to twelve months in the chain gang and a fine of two hundred and fifty dollars. The girls were fined fifty dollars each and the son one hundred dollars. While the family was in jail a mob, led by the town marshal, went to the house in the night and shot into it with their guns. "Next morning the woman with her children fled from her home never to return."

And yet there is steady progress -up-stream. In truth there can be no successful economic change in Georgia without the black man's aid. First of all the Negroes are property holders. Sixty years after slavery and despite everything Georgia Negroes own two million acres of land, a space nearly as large as the late kingdom of Montenegro. Their taxable property saved from low wages and systematic cheating has struggled up from twelve millions of dollars in 1890 to over sixty millions today; and now and then even the remnant of their political power strikes a blow. Once, in Atlanta, for instance, some dozen years ago, the candidate of the "White Primary" who was Mayor of the city was found drunk in a bawdy-house just before election and was arrested by the police before they recognized their distinguished prisoner. This proved too much for the city to swallow and in the regular election they threw off their disfranchising vows to the "White Primary" and, assisted by the small number of registered colored voters, elected a decent man as mayor.

Again but last year in Savannah a fight within the "White Primary" between the corrupt gang and

decency gave twelve hundred Negro voters the balance of power. Determined efforts were made to intimidate the Negroes. Skull and cross bones signed by the Ku Klux Klan were posted on the doors of eight of the prominent Negro churches with the legend, "This is a white man's fight; keep away." Warning slips were put under the doors of colored citizens. In vain. The colored voters held their own political meetings, financed their own campaign, went into the election and of their twelve hundred votes it was estimated that less than a hundred went for the gang; the reform mayor was elected.

The hills twist and pass. Slowly the climate changes -cold pines replace the yellow monarchs of the South. There is no cotton. From the door of hewn log cabins faces appear -dead white faces and drawn, thin forms. Here live the remnants of the poor whites.

I am in the hot, crowded, and dirty Jim Crow car, where I belong. A black woman with endless babies is faring forth from Georgia, North. Two of the babies are sitting on parts of me. I am not comfortable. Then I look out of the window and somehow it seems to me that here in the Jim Crow car and there in the mountain cabin lies the future of Georgia -in the intelligence and union of these laborers, white and black, on this soil wet with their blood and tears. They hate and despise each other today. They lynch and murder body and soul. They are separated by the width of a world. And yet -and yet, stranger things have happened under the sun than understanding between those who are born blind.