

Is the Black Race Doomed?

By JUDGE HARRIS DICKSON



FORTY years ago the negro was the healthiest man in America. Today he is the weakest, most predisposed to disease, the man with the least resistive power. Heredity and the white man's regulations made him what he was in '65; heredity and the negro mode of life makes him what he is to-day. The causes stand out like sign-boards, so plain that a voluntary ignorance alone can refuse to comprehend.

Before the war the great mass of negroes—as they are to-day—were agricultural laborers. Their masters prescribed hours of toil and rest, provided homes and overlooked their amusements. Irrespective of any humane motive, the master's selfish interest demanded the best possible care of his property.

The planters had received from Africa a horde of barbarians, who had no idea of hygiene, sanitation, or medicine. The planter took this stock and made a healthy race in a new land. His system was simple: he enforced the primary laws of health. Every plantation constituted a separate community. The will of the planter was the supreme law. He located his slave quarters on the healthiest spot of his plantation, laid them out in the form of a little village, with separate houses, yards, and gardens for each family. There was good water and good drainage. Space and air were cheap; every negro had plenty of both, and the overcrowding of cabins was never permitted. When a family became too large for one cabin, another was assigned. Each cabin had its open fireplace, the best of ventilation, and an ample supply of fuel.

"Clean up, boys!" came the call every few days. Then the cabin was cleaned as thoroughly as the ward of a hospital. Each negro was compelled to whitewash his cabin three to four times a year. If disease appeared, the cabin was thoroughly disinfected. Shade trees surrounded the quarters and furnished a natural park for children to play or parents to rest. Each negro reported every morning, "ick" or "well." He was either well enough to go to work, or sick enough to go to the hospital, where he received competent attention.

The planter prescribed a regular routine of work and play, food and sleep. Plantation negroes were allowed an almost unrestricted freedom in their simple sports, which the planter encouraged. But whiskey, cocaine, craps, and low dives had no place in their lives. They had no worries, no responsibilities, and no thought for tomorrow. Even yet the old-time negro loves to recount the joys of the old time. Early to bed, they rose early and were able to do a full day's work, with a long rest at midday for man and mule. Their food was not left to chance handling by untrained cooks, but was prepared at the general kitchen—good, wholesome, and abundant. Mammy made famous stews and browned her corn-dodgers to a turn. Every field hand, with sleek and shiny face, bore smiling witness to her achievements.

The Negro in 1860 Was a Near-perfect Specimen of Physical Man.

No race was ever in finer physical trim to step into freedom, or better equipped to work out its own salvation. The negro was powerful in limb, and sound in mind. But all this

was the white man's work, not the negro's as later events prove.

This is not intended to defend or idealize slavery. Far from it. But the regular, well-governed life proved ideal in building up a race of strong parents and healthy children. The undeniable fact is that the negro in 1860 was a near-perfect specimen of physical man; and that is the point from which I wish to start.

In the South to-day the negro lives where he pleases, and in such manner as suits him best. The plantation quarters are not laid out as formerly, the cabins are scattered, often without regard to sanitation or water. No efficient supervision is exercised over the negro's care of his cabin. He is notoriously unclean. His home is rarely whitewashed or disinfected. In the rural districts the blacks have nothing like the medical attention and care that was formerly bestowed upon them. Negroes dearly love medicine; all kinds of yarbs and teas and concoctions. They delight in dosing themselves with patent nostrums, all manner of home cures, and conjure charms.

Tuberculosis a New Enemy.

Perhaps the deadliest enemy of the negro is tuberculosis—but it is a new enemy. Old-time Southern physicians are almost unanimous in the opinion that before the war tuberculosis was less frequent among the negroes than the whites. Some of them mention it as exceedingly rare—many insisting that the black man was practically immune to the white plague. Consumption in Africa is not common. But after the infection was carried there by slave traders and colonists, the negro in his native climate developed a greater tendency than the whites to contract disease, and it was far more fatal.

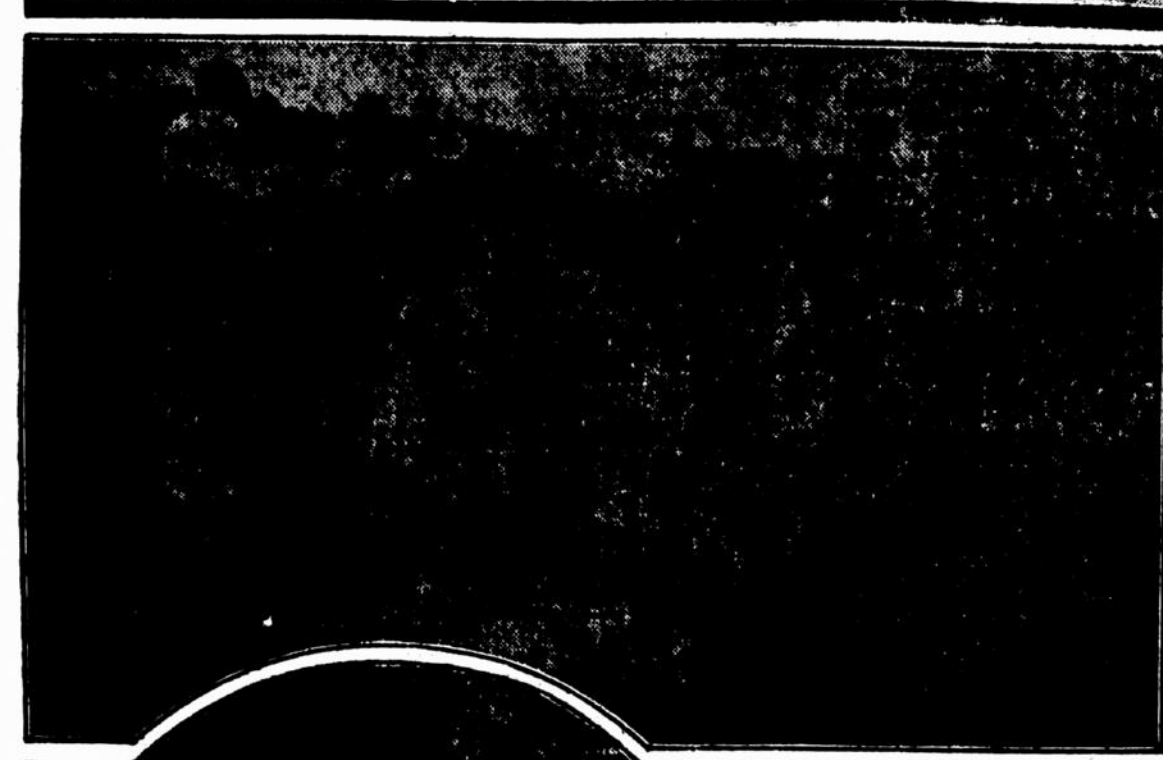
As late as 1830 a prominent Cincinnati physician reported a case of "undoubted consumption" in a negro with "unmistakable evidence of the disease." This, in a black, was so uncommon as to excite curiosity and comment. This immunity enjoyed by the slave marked the triumph of hygienic regulations prescribed by their masters. But a terrible change has come over the free man.

The city of Charleston, South Carolina, has preserved its vital statistics for many years. These show a death rate from consumption before the war about equal for white and black—with a steady parallel decrease from 1822. Since the war the white death rate has decreased by 134 while the negro rate has increased 234 per 100,000. One went down while the other went up. The hand of the master has relaxed. Negro mortality from this cause is now greatly in excess of the whites. The march of medical science has steadily decreased the white death rate, but can do nothing for the negro, because the negro will do nothing for himself. The death rate of the black man advances by progression, greater each year as the old blood dies out and the younger generation is less able to resist disease. If the galloping consumption is not checked, that alone may bury the negro problem in many million graves. The highest authorities say that this factor alone will seal the doom of the race, unless something be done. One prominent Southern physician states that he has known of but a solitary instance where a negro has been cured, because they will not follow instructions or persist in treatment.

At the outbreak of the Civil War thousands of negroes were examined for army service. Competent surgeons enthusiastically pronounced them equal, if not superior, to white men, and reported tuberculosis very rare among them. Yet, according to some statistics, within the next four

years the colored troops developed a tendency to consumption in excess of the whites. Their average death rate from all diseases was nearly three times as great as the whites. Dr. Gould, in his Statistics of the Sanitary Commission, speaks of "the inordinate mortality and singular susceptibility to fatal diseases exhibited by the colored troops."

Coming down to the year 1890, we find that while 379 white men out of 100,000 in New York die of consumption, there were 845 negroes; 365 whites in Boston against 884 negroes; 160 whites in St. Louis against 606 negroes, 250 whites in New Orleans against 587 negroes. A smaller disproportion is manifested in Philadelphia; 269 whites to 532 negroes; practically twice as many. This disproportion seems to be less in Savannah, Georgia.



More negroes should emulate these Southern farm laborers, working and recreating in the open air.



Judge Dickson points out that the planter housed his slaves in solitary cabins and enforced hygienic living.

What do these figures mean? To me they seem to mean that the negro, having naturally weak lungs, was saved from the consequences of that weakness by the conditions in which he lived as a slave. The enforced cleanliness of his cabin; the enforced regular hours; his necessarily more strict observance of family ties; in short, his obedience to the simple laws of health, prevented the natural weakness of his lungs from developing into tuberculosis. But when, immediately after emancipation, he changed his habits and mode of living, he did so in a way calculated to encourage this natural, hereditary tendency, and that tendency has increased with every generation.

At first, like the rabbit imported into Australia, the English sparrow and the Russian thistle, this transplanted race threatened by sheer power of production to dominate the land. This might have proved true if the conditions so favorable to its increase had continued. But these conditions were not of the negro's making; they were forced upon him, contrary to his nature, and he abandoned them. The results of the last census exploded all fears that his overwhelming numbers would ever enable him to beat down the Anglo-Saxon civilization.

Those who estimated—and feared—his probable increase did not foresee his emancipation, nor the changes in his mode of life when the white man's

population of sixteen Southern states shows a white gain of 94 per cent, as compared with a negro gain of 242 per cent. At the same time the average negro increase in population was considerably below the whites. The only answer to this is that the negroes abandoned the country and moved to town.

This movement toward has created a negro utterly unknown before the war: the city vagrant, gambler, loafer, criminal. He removed himself from the field where he was a producer, and went to the city where great numbers of them become a public charge. By this I do not mean that they are in the almshouse. I merely mean that they are idlers and nonproducers.

Cincinnati negroes select the Second, Sixth, and Eighteenth wards. New York blacks prefer the Ninth, Twelfth, Fifteenth, Sixteenth, Twentieth, and Twenty-second wards.

The Seventh Ward in Philadelphia has 9,000; the Eighth, 3,000, and the Twenty-seventh, 2,000. Philadelphia is now the fourth negro city in the world, with nearly 40,000.

Those familiar with local conditions in these cities will know that the negroes have selected the worst possible localities of each, where vice and crime are the chief formative influence. To the negro this spells death—in evitable extinction.

In no Northern community is the negro self-sustaining. His birth rate does not equal the death rate, and immigration from the South alone maintains his numbers. Every Southern negro who goes North is to a great extent withdrawn from the reproductive population. That is to say, he does not contribute to the increase of his race by maintaining a birth rate in excess of his death rate. It can safely be said that in no Northern community is the negro self-sustaining. Shut off immigration and the race will ultimately vanish from the North. In New Hampshire, for instance, there were 651 negroes in 1790, and 614 in 1890.

Negro's Worst Enemy—Tuberculosis.

Scientists attempt to account for the negro's susceptibility to consumption in outdoor climates by showing that he has what is called the "tropical lung." Which means this: In the Arctic regions the lung must be of sufficient capacity to convert each day forty-five ounces of carbon into carbonic-acid gas. This is essential to maintain the animal heat of the body. Beneath the equator the sun keeps a negro warm and he does not require such powerful lung machinery.

The average lung capacity of the negro is considerably less than the white man's. Again taking United States army figures (1861-65) we find that the healthy white man averaged 100 cubic inches of lung capacity; the healthy negro 80 cubic inches.

the full-blooded negro 165.3, and the mulatto 161.6. So that the white man is most strongly fortified against consumption, and the mulatto least. Between the two comes the full black. Therefore the mulatto is most liable to consumption, next the full-blooded negro; and the white man least.

Before the war venereal disease among the negroes was not plentiful. According to United States army figures the average negro deaths from such diseases is now nearly three times as many as the whites. Details of this horror cannot be given. The universal fact need only be stated to suggest the inevitable result—and the facts are growing worse.

It was originally contended that the negro was exempt from malarial diseases, and upon this suggestion his economic value as a slave was based. But later facts have demonstrated that even then there was little or no difference between himself and the whites in this respect. It now develops that colored troops are practically three times as susceptible to malarial poison as the whites.

In the second annual report of the Atlanta Board of Health occurs this reference to excessive mortality among the Southern negroes: "The disparity in the relative death rates of the whites and negroes is striking and invariable. The record in this city does not differ from that of other cities. The fact is significant and full of melancholy interest, and unless the figures in the cities are reversed by the statistics from the rural districts, the fate of the race will not be difficult to read."

But the figures are not reversed. Under their most favorable environment in the South the negro increase from 1880 to 1890 was 13.24 per cent, while the white increase was 23.91 per cent. This slump has taken place within one generation of the exceptionally healthy condition which prevailed in 1860. If healthy fathers and fruitful mothers produce such offspring, what will be the result when these normal parents are gone, and the race depends upon the rickety and infirm for its increase?

The old-time negro reared in slavery is still a stronger man than the growing generation. The death rate in Northern cities was proportionately less for negroes forty-five years and over than for the younger negroes. The frightful infant mortality is most significant. In Richmond, Virginia, out of 1,000 children 530 negroes die the first year, as against 187 whites. In Baltimore the infant mortality exceeds the whites by 100.2 per cent; in Washington by 138.5 per cent. This appalling death rate cannot be balanced by a greater fecundity.

One of the most serious conditions affecting the future lies in the lamentable and inevitable fact that the negro has no conception of the marriage relation. As measured by the white man's ideals, there is practically no marriage among their masses. They mate without ceremony and separate without formality. They are married but not "married."

"Tush! fust dat nigger got married, den he got 'voled. He had to pay de preacher at one end an' de lawyer at de tuder." The wise negro who had done neither was \$28 better off.

Five years on a plantation is generally sufficient to work a revolution as to the holy bonds of wedlock. Many of the same negroes are there, but there has been a sort of progressive euclype party in which the players have secured new partners. One of the loudest complaints against slavery was that it did not recognize the holy estate, that it separated husband and wife, parent and child. No man who knows Southern conditions can doubt that families were kept together by their masters far better than they are to-day.

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