



WORLD WAR AND THE COLOR LINE

MANY colored persons, and persons interested in them, may easily make the mistake of supposing that the present war is far removed from the color problem of America and that in the face of this great catastrophe we may forget for a moment such local problems and give all attention and contributions to the seemingly more pressing cause.

This attitude is a mistake. The present war in Europe is one of the great disasters due to race and color prejudice and it but foreshadows greater disasters in the future.

It is not merely national jealousy, or the so-called "race" rivalry of Slav, Teuton and Latin, that is the larger cause of this war. It is rather the wild quest for Imperial expansion among colored races between Germany, England and France primarily, and Belgium, Italy, Russia and Austria-Hungary in lesser degree. Germany long since found herself shut out from acquiring colonies. She looked toward South America, but the "Monroe Doctrine" stood in her way. She started for Africa and by bulldozing methods secured one good colony, one desert and two swamps. Her last efforts looked toward North Africa and Asia-Minor. Finally, she evidently decided at the first opportunity to seize English or French colonies and to this end feverishly expanded her navy, kept her army at the highest point of effi-

ciency and has been for twenty years the bully of Europe with a chip on her shoulder and defiance in her mouth.

The colonies which England and France own and Germany covets are largely in tropical and semi-tropical lands and inhabited by black, brown and yellow peoples. In such colonies there is a chance to confiscate land, work the natives at low wages, make large profits and open wide markets for cheap European manufactures. Asia, Africa, the South Sea Islands, the West Indies, Mexico and Central America and much of South America have long been designated by the white world as fit field for this kind of commercial exploitation, for the benefit of Europe and with little regard for the welfare of the natives. One has only to remember the forced labor in South Africa, the outrages in Congo, the cocoa-slavery in Portuguese Africa, the land monopoly and peonage of Mexico, the exploitation of Chinese coolies and the rubber horror of the Amazon to realize what white imperialism is doing to-day in well-known cases, not to mention thousands of less-known instances.

In this way a theory of the inferiority of the darker peoples and a contempt for their rights and aspirations has become all but universal in the greatest centers of modern culture. Here it was that American color prejudice and race hatred received in recent years unexpected aid and sympathy. To-day civilized nations are fighting like mad dogs over the right to own and exploit these darker peoples.

In such case where should our sympathy lie? Undoubtedly, with the Allies

—with England and France in particular. Not that these nations are innocent. England was in the past blood-guilty above all lands in her wicked and conscienceless rape of darker races. England was primarily responsible for American slavery, for the starvation of India, and the Chinese opium traffic. But the salvation of England is that she has the ability to learn from her mistakes. To-day no white nation is fairer in its treatment of darker peoples than England. Not that England is yet fair. She is not yet just, and she still nourishes much disdain for colored races, erects contemptible and humiliating political and social barriers and steals their land and labor; but as compared with Germany England is an angel of light. The record of Germany as a colonizer toward weaker and darker people is the most barbarous of any civilized people and grows worse instead of better. France is less efficient than England as an administrator of colonies and has consequently been guilty of much neglect and injustice; but she is nevertheless the most kindly of all European nations in her personal relations with colored folk. She draws no dead line of color and colored Frenchmen always love France.

Belgium has been as pitiless and grasping as Germany and in strict justice deserves every pang she is suffering after her unspeakable atrocities in Congo. Russia has never drawn a color line but has rather courted the yellow races, although with ulterior motives. Japan, however, instilled wholesome respect in this line.

Undoubtedly, then the triumph of the allies would at least leave the plight of the colored races no worse than now. Indeed, considering the fact that black Africans and brown Indians and yellow Japanese are fighting for France and England it may be that they will come out of this frightful welter of blood with new ideas of the essential equality of all men.

On the other hand, the triumph of Germany means the triumph of every

force calculated to subordinate darker peoples. It would mean triumphant militarism, autocratic and centralized government and a studied theory of contempt for everything except Germany—"Germany above everything in the world." The despair and humiliation of Germany in the eighteenth century has brought this extraordinary rebound of self-exaltation and disdain for mankind. The triumph of this idea would mean a crucifixion of darker peoples unparalleled in history.

The writer speaks without anti-German bias; personally he has deep cause to love the German people. They made him believe in the essential humanity of white folk twenty years ago when he was near to denying it. But even then the spell of militarism was in the air, and the Prussian strut had caught the nation's imagination. They were starting on the same road with the southern American whites toward a contempt toward human beings and a faith in their own utter superiority to all other breeds. This feeling had not then applied itself particularly to colored folk and has only begun to to-day; but it is going by leaps and bounds. Germany needs but the rôle of world conquest to make her one of the most contemptible of "Nigger" hating nations. Just as we go to press, the *Berliner Tageblatt* publishes a proclamation by "German representatives of Science and Art to the World of Culture" in which men like Harnack, Bode, Hauptmann, Suderman, Roentgen, Humperdink, Wundt and others, insult hundreds of millions of human beings by openly sneering at "Mongrels and Niggers."

As colored Americans then, and as Americans who fear race prejudice as the greatest of War-makers, our sympathies in the awful conflict should be with France and England; not that they have conquered race prejudice, but they have at least begun to realize its cost and evil, while Germany exalts it.

If so great a catastrophe has followed jealousies and greed built on a desire to steal from and oppress people whom the

dominant culture despises, how much wilder and wider will be the conflict when black and brown and yellow people stand up together shoulder to shoulder and demand recognition as men!

Let us give then our sympathies to those nations whose triumph will most tend to postpone if not to make unnecessary a world war of races.



A CORRESPONDENCE



THE General Federation of (white) Women's Clubs sent a representative to the meeting of the National Association of Colored Women at Wilberforce, and the magazine of the General Federation published an excellent article concerning that meeting. On the strength of this the magazine has evidently obtained the mailing list of the colored organizations and is sending this letter broadcast:

GENERAL FEDERATION MAGAZINE

Only official organ of the General Federation of Women's Clubs

New York, N. Y., Sept. 22, 1914.

My dear Madam:

Your name has been sent to me by Miss Zona Gale, formerly Chairman of Civics of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, who recently spoke before your Colored Women's Convention, as being one of the prominent colored women in this country who would without doubt be interested in the *General Federation Magazine*, which is the official organ of the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

I am using this month an account of your Convention by Miss Zona Gale and I know you will be interested to see that in this important Magazine. May I not hope for your support in the way of at least one subscription to the Magazine? I would like to add this also: If one woman could be appointed in each club or organization to take subscriptions, she might find it profitable for herself or her

organization to make a business of this matter. The price of the Magazine is \$1.00 a year and we allow a discount of 25% on each subscription. Can we not join our forces in some way? We should be glad to give you publicity in the Magazine whenever you desire.

We are sending you a sample copy of our Biennial number.

Very cordially yours,
(Signed) HARRIET BISHOP WATERS,
General Federation Magazine.

This letter has received the following reply from THE CRISIS office:

Dear Madam:

I have your circular concerning a subscription to the *General Federation Magazine*.

Do you think it is fair to ask a colored person to subscribe to the official organ of an organization which discriminates against them so outrageously as yours does?

Very sincerely yours, etc.

We trust that similar letters will go from every colored woman approached. This is not a matter of hatred or complaint. It is a matter of self-respect. The General Federation of Women's Clubs has insulted every black woman in America. They have deliberately and openly put a brand on her. Clubs composed of every race and nation in America are welcome to this federation except those of black women. Against this contemptible action taken by northern white women to placate the petty spite of southern white women colored women cannot and do not wish to take any action. They are quietly and effectively doing their own club work. But they refuse to forget the insult or condone it.

Above all they resent on the part of these narrow-minded white women the assumption that the exclusion of colored women's clubs from the General Federation has "helped" the colored organization. The stealing of my purse may make me careful and saving but I owe little gratitude to the thief, and at all events for the thief to demand gratitude is adding insult to injury.