The Poor Oppressed.*

BY PROFESSOR D. B. WILLSON.

Gentlemen of the Theological class:

We greet you to-night, as you come to begin the studies of the session of 1912-13. We rejoice in the Fatherly care that has led us. We magnify the grace that has led us to take up the great work of preaching the Gospel.

Among the signs of his Messiahsdom which Jesus gave to the disciples of John was this: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." In the book of Psalms, we find this declaration of God's care of the poor: "Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith Jehovah; I will set him in the safety he panteth for."

We are living in a day of vehement contention on behalf of the "common people," and against those who use them sedulously while they are serving them. Many races are thus dealt with, some of them but lately come to our shores. One race, early brought here for bondage, has had fifty years of emancipation, fifty years in which to give the service of True men. What has the half century done for them? My theme is, "The Poor Oppressed."

When the Civil War began in 1861, many of the negro race were held in bondage under the Con-

*Opening lecture of the session, 1912-13, of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pa., Tuesday, September 17, 1912.
†The Revision.
The new President of March 4, 1861, born in poverty and in the midst of slavery, believed the system to be sinful. He thus phrased it: "If slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong." However, he took the oath of office, purposing to enforce this law, as other laws. So in the early period of the War, he rebuked John C. Frémont, who had been in 1856 the candidate of the new-born Republican party for President, but now was a Major-General in the Army; rebuked him for proclaiming liberty to the slaves within his command in the West, but he ignored the order of General Frémont, returning the escaping slaves to those who claimed them. He tried to save the institution, as it was included in the provisions of the Union; and the States, especially the border States, should witness her faithfulness. It was a sore problem to him.

General Butler at Fortress Monroe, brought face to face with the same question of the incoming fugitives, reenlisted their ready service, their self-sacrifices. He took the chivalrous at their own word; they were seeking their property. He treated these helpers as the other property of the foe was treated, when needed, as "contraband of war"—a happy solution of the dilemma. This action gave the same snarl attached itself to the incoming slaves, a name that they bore both East and West during the War. They were "contrabands."

But the Union cause made little progress in the East. The road to Richmond was blocked. At Manassas on the 21st of July, 1861, only 34 miles from Washington, the army was turned back. It was again turned back on the Peninsula from before Richmond in the Seven Days' battle, June 26 to July 3, in 1862. These reverses deeply troubled the President. God went not forth with our armies.

On the 22d of July, at the Cabinet meeting, he brought out a paper and read it to the Cabinet. It declared his purpose to proclaim emancipation to the slaves, in the contingency of their masters' persistent rebellion. He would wait 100 days for them to yield. When Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State, heard the paper, he observed that this was stretching out our hands to Ethiopia. Mr. Lincoln saw at once the force of this document, and praised the thought of Mr. Seward of his plan under the circumstances, that it was "the last shriek on the retreat." He laid the paper away, and waited, and prayed for victory. But the situation grew darker. The defeat of 1861 at Manassas was repeated on August 30-31 near the same place. The victorious army of the Confederates under General Lee was now considered to cross the Potomac, and after the battle of South Mountain on September 14, went forward on the way to Hagerstown, northward, the event afterwards taken by him in 1863: but now he was not by General McClellan on the field of Antietam and at Sharpsburg. He was halted on Friday, the 17th of September, and retreated the next day across the river. The National Cemetery there holds 4,667 Union dead, 1,321 of them known, 1,346 unknown, as marked on the upright cannon near the entrance. The word of this victory was slow in reaching Washington; but when it came, the President convened the Cabinet, and brought up the paper of July 22, just two months before, and declared his purpose to issue it, adding in a low tone that he had vowed to God to do this. Nothing now turned him from his purpose, not even the great reverse at the Rappahannock on the 13th day of December. The National Cemetery on Mary's Heights at Fredericksburg contains the
graves of the Union dead, and there also is a large cemetery of the Confederate dead. Mr. Lincoln held to his trust in God, having passed through the mental struggle as to duty, and in faithfulness to his word once spoken, he gave forth the Emancipation Proclamation on the 1st day of January, 1863. In this he said:

"I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and Government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States, wherein the people thereof respectively are in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

-- (the list follows)"

"And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within such designated States and parts of States are and henceforth shall be free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons. And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages. And I further declare and make known that such persons as in this condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations and other places, and to men vessels of all sorts in said service. And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I do invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

The sentence at the close was suggested by Mr. Chase, and the words are but little altered from the language of Mr. Chase. Mr. Seward had suggested the word "maintain."

That summer of 1863 Vicksburg, the Mississippi stronghold, surrendered; and at Gettysburg, on the slope of Cemetery Hill, the Confederate power reached its "high-water mark," so marked one on the field, both events of the 4th day of July, the day our people declared their independence of British power.

It has been often said, and not alone by Union men, that the War should have ended then. It continued for 21 months longer. Within that period, the ex-slaves had weapons of war placed in their hands; and again they gave ready service, in the East and West, with the negro soldiers of the North. When the Union army, batted in the assault at Cold Harbor, crossed the James in June, 1864, and moved on Petersburg on the 11th of June, these troops showed great valor. Charles A. Dana, the Assistant Secretary of War, was then at the headquarters of the Army. He says in his Recollections: "General Smith told us that the negro troops fought magnificently; the hardest fighting being done by them. The forts they stormed were, I think, the worst of all. After the affair was over, General Smith went to thank them, and tell them he was proud of their courage and dash. He said they had no superiors as soldiers, and that hereafter he should send them into a difficult place as readily as the best white troops. They captured six out of the sixteen cannons which he
took" (page 236). When the city was occupied, Mr. Lincoln went down from Washington and visited the army. Mr. Dana says: "As we came back, we passed through the division of colored troops which had so greatly distinguished itself under Smith on the 13th. They were drawn up in double lines on each side of the road, and they welcomed the President with hearty cheers. It was a memorable thing to behold him, where fortune it was to represent the principle of emancipation passing bartered through the extremities of those degrees armed to defend the integrity of the nation." (Page 237).

The Lincoln earnestly desired a permanent basis for the freedom of this people, and sought for the adoption of the sixt Amendment. It was a matter of deep concern to him that any of them should ever be returned to bondage. He put forth effort for the admission of Nevada as a State, that another vote might be secured for ratification. But it was months after he died that it was adopted, that on December 15, 1865. It declares:

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." 

Two other amendments were adopted, affecting the negro and other races; the sixth Amendment on July 28, 1866:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." (Section 1.)

The sixth Amendment on March 30, 1869:

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United

*Mark Dana's Recollections of the Civil War, pages 124-127.
During the Civil War, children were reported as enrolled in the sixteen Southern States and the District of Columbia. One million colored children were enrolled in the public schools. This is 25.44 per cent of the colored population of these States, which is estimated to be 3,188,710. The number of colored public school teachers in these States is 32,234.

It is estimated that at the close of the Civil War less than 5 per cent of the Freedmen could read and write. In 1900, 25.4 per cent could both read and write, and in 1910, 62.5 per cent. There are more than 50 institutions devoted to the secondary and higher training of the negro. As to property, reports show that in 1910 the value of property on which negroes paid taxes was: in Arkansas, $23,500,000; in Georgia, $32,373,437; in North Carolina, $20,000,000; in Virginia, $27,000,000; and in Texas, $20,000,000.

From the first, however, the suffrage of the negroes was resisted, and when the political rights of the Confederates were restored, and the elections resulted in Democratic success, there was a change. From 1865 to 1877 the negroes in the Southern States were disfranchised largely by election devices, practices, and intimidation. "Beginning with 1867 the Southern States have by the adoption of Compensated Amendments, sought to disfranchise negro suffrage," in this order: Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia and Oklahoma. "The Grandfather clause permits a person who is not able to satisfy either the educational or property tests to continue a voter for life if he is a voter in 1867 (or in Oklahoma if in 1890), or is an old soldier or the legal descendant of such a voter or soldier, pro-

vided, except in Oklahoma, by register prior to a fixed date. The Oklahoma Grandfather clause is permanent." Mississippi has no Grandfather clause." Their efforts were successful. The results are stated briefly in an editorial of the Richmond, Va., News-Leader of July 9 as this year, called out by a proposition now to come to the negro vote for the Democratic ticket. It is headed, 'No Retraction,' and says:

"The Republican party in the South has for years been striving—pretending to strive—to shake off this body of death, that it might be known as a white man's party. Do we propose voluntarily to relieve that party of the burden of the negro vote, and not only submit to compulsion, but only so far as we must, to what for nearly 50 years we have signified, and justly signified, as the infamous crime of negro suffrage?"

"The Fifteenth Amendment has long been recognized by all the world as the most cruelly perpetrated by our Northern conquerors. This proclaimed the doctrine of racial political equality and gave the negro the right to vote. We were powerless to resist it directly, but we never ceased to deny it, and all the world, headed by the Supreme Court of the United States, has now acquiesced in our substantial submission of it."

We turn from this party to the Republican. Mr. Clause was the radical member of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. He finally retired from it, and sought the Presidency in 1884 (his ambition and zeal). Yet when Mr. Dawley died, that radical Pro-Slavery judge, whom Jackson had appointed, Mr. Lincoln named Mr. Chase for the vacant place, in his care for the emancipated slaves. But in these latter days, Republican Presidents have named Southern Democrats for United States judgeships, and the present Chief Magistrate appointed an ex-Confederate soldier to the Chief Justiceship of the highest Court.

There is a new party. This the Progressive party, eliminates the negro from the political stage, but substitutes in its stead the Southern states and the District of Columbia, the work of Educational institutions, the negro's right to vote, and the negro's political rights have been restored, and the negro is an old soldier or the legal descendant of such a soldier or soldier, pro-

of Woman Suffrage is exposed by this party and representatives of this cause were welcomed to the Convention at Chicago. Though linked to men by the closest earthly ties, women are to vote at the polls and in the Conventions. This is for their protection. Not to black people—in the South, neither men nor women. They are not given any assurance in any of the so-called platforms.

But let us look back, that we may look forward! In 1852, Iowa prohibited the immigration of negroes. In Illinois it was long a misdemeanor for a negro to come into the State with the intention of residing there. Indians, in 1853, passed a law prohibiting free negroes and mulattoes from coming into the State. In Ohio, negroes were required to give bond for good behavior at a condition of residence. Though after the Revolutionary War free negroes were allowed to vote in every State except Georgia and South Carolina; yet between 1792 and 1861 Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Indiana, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia denied suffrage to negroes. New York and Tennessee had limited negro suffrage. Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin allowed negro suffrage. The remaining States prohibited it. The 15th Amendment made the provision general, that color or race should be no bar to suffrage. In the fall of 1913, in County and State gatherings throughout the country, the Jubilee year of Emancipation is to be celebrated and evidence shown of the progress the negro race has made.

In the summer of 1913, another Semi-Centennial is to be celebrated. On the field of Gettysburg, Union and Confederate survivors will be gathered together. North and South are at war again. The struggle was between Americans, brethren. The Commanders on either side had been educated in the same school—in the Olden. The early cry, "On to Richmond," was heard. But the Confederate forces held back the Union army for eight years. They met the valor and self-denial of the Southern troops. When Early's corps broke away from this besieged city and came up to the defenses of Washington, after their retreat down the valley his haversacks off, the poor-clad sharpshooters who lay dead within their trenches were opened and found to contain nothing but cartridge! The contest was immense. The South was overpowered, out-numbered and hemmed in, the coast blockaded. This inequality in numbers is set forth in figures in an exhibit on the wall of the Confederate Museum in their former Capital. This is the view held forth of the struggle; the right to withdraw was prevented by force. The Grand Bazaar of Michigan in its issue of May 13 gives an account of the Order, formed after the War, of the farmers of both sections of the country. It says: "The farmers of the Grange were prominent Free Masons. Their connection with that Order gave their valuable experiences to be used by them in arranging the collective force which was to hold in a fraternal bond the agricultural people of America. The terrible War of the Rebellion had just ended. The issue between the North and South had been settled, not because the South was convinced of its error, but because of the overpowering numerical strength of the North."

What is lacking then? One may see by what has fallen out of the platforms of the political parties since the early days. There is wanting the moral view of events, a sense that God has dealt, in dealing with this nation, as a moral being; has clustered, will claim it for certain causes which He judges and condemns. In the year 1863, in the hours of the War, the Senate of the United States passed a resolution requesting the President to appoint a day for humiliation and prayer, with this confession, "knowingly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, and generally believing that no people, however great in numbers and resources, or however strong in the justice of their cause, can prosper without His favor, and at the same time deploiring the national offences which have provoked His righteous judgment." The President appointed the 30th of April as a National Fast. Imagine such a resolution now, in the turmoil of to-day! Yet would one question the propriety of it, or the call for it? He acknowledged the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence on the over-ruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble
and said of the continuance of this trial: "The Almighty has His own purposes. Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." If we should suppose that American slavery is one of those offences, which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but, which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the wise due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the beholders in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

There are contained in these words the following truths: 

1. Nations, as do persons, offend God, and thereby become subjects of His wrath. 

2. This wrath of God is revealed in the evils that He visits upon them. 

3. These evils have a just relation to the aggravations of their offences. 

4. These evils come in God's season, when the measure of their sin is filled up. 

5. In all this, God manifests Himself as the righteous Ruler of the world. 

6. These evils had been brought home by the Spirit of God to the heart of the President of the United States, in the latter experience of four years of Civil War, owing to slavery, and the strong man bowed himself and said: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." And many bowed with him. 

Not so the South. Yet in the early days, Virginia was more anti-slavery than the merchants of New England, who went down to the sea in traffic. George Washington freed his slaves in his last will and testament. Thomas Jefferson said he trembled for his country when he remembered God was just. In 1829, on January 19, George Bancroft wrote from Washington to his wife: "The Colonization Society had a famous meeting last night in the Hall of Representatives. . . . I heard with horror that the slave trade is still continued under so aggravated circumstances as ever, and that the internal opacity of the slave dealers still carries one hundred thousand negroes annually into foreign bondage. . . . Mr. (William S.) Archer of Virginia spoke last evening and at considerable length. From the tenor of his remarks, it is plain that the State which he represents is at least deeply sensible of the evils of slavery, and fearfully looks forward in an impending crisis. He described the condition of free blacks in the slave-holding States to be wrecked in the extreme; cut off from all opportunity of successful reoccupation, and necessarily rendered vicious, because they are necessarily idle. But for my part, I shall not take, as nor as the South is concerned, I shall not take a deep interest in their participation in forwarding colonization in Africa, unless they also take some steps, initiatory at least, to end emancipation. And of this there exists little hope, until the evil becomes far more intense than it now is." And this from one who in the next decade entered the Cabinet of James K. Polk, and in the following decade was a Douglas Democrat until the War. Why, then, did not emancipation come, and not Civil War?

The time of his writing from Washington was in the days of Calhoun's famous manifestoes, the third being sent out on August 28, 1839, of which President Van Buren has said:

"Thirty years later the program laid down in it was carried out by the South piece by piece, and the justification of the Southern course was hinted, point by point, upon this argument." In its Cal-

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John C. Calhoun, by Dr. T. Y. Van Hise, 1890, page 98.

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have asserted, that "so far from the Constitution being the work of the American people collectively, no such political body, either now or ever, did expect." Dr. Von Holst says of this statement: "The historical review by which he tried to prove this assertion contains two seemingly slight, but in fact very important, errors. The Colonies did not by name and enumeration declare themselves free and independent States, nor is the Constitution declared to be binding between the States so ratifying; but Article vii of the Constitution reads: "The ratification of the Conventions of nine States shall be sufficient for the establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying." ** What shaped Calhoun’s view? Slavery, it is, in his opinion, not only a fact, but an immutable fact, because it is the direct outcome of the natural relation between the white and the black races.**

In January, 1831, Mr. Garrison in Boston had begun The Liberator, on behalf of "immediate and unconditional emancipation." Then, in December, 1832, the American Anti-Slavery Society put forth its "Declaration of Principles." Again to quote Professor Von Holst: "No one understood as well as he (Mr. Calhoun), that the appearance of the abolitionists had laid the axe to the root of slavery, though they were but a handful of men and women, with neither finance, social position, office, money, nor the general approbation of the public mind to make them formidable adversaries; and therefore as yet in one fully understood how terribly in earnest he was, and how correctly he read the future, when he declared at every opportunity that the minority, that is the South, was doomed if State sovereignty was not recognized as the central pillar on which the dome of the Constitution rested."

Does it seem at all, as if in three latter days, there has come over the people generally the Southern view of events, overshadowing the moral cause of the war and its awful judgments, and leading to an acceptance of such estimates of our fellow-men as inevitably leads to injustice and oppression? Is it sending the Church, as the State, as aforesaid? In vain, as already said, do we look to the great party platforms for any moral view. For what leader, then, can the surviving Radicals of 1860-65 light their torch, to kindle the hopes and pledges of the early years, to help to make good the Constitutional provisions for men of every race? Our Church, of course, has a testimony that goes further than pledges of any platform in witnessing for the recognition of God, of the Lord of Hosts, of the Governor among the nations, because the Constitution itself does not fully the great party platforms—does not even deal with questions in a moral light. As far as the two older parties are concerned the issue is still much in their view as the present canvas is the Tariff, and the Democratic leader opened last month, with an appeal to the favorites of Pennsylvania on this issue, the old-time term of John Quincy Adams’ term and onward till the moral question of human slavery was thrust upon the nation.

It is with nations as with persons, the great question is to know full is the Treasury, but what is the character? We have come at last, in this day, to know that the 50 million mark is not: Is he a millionnaire, but what is his character? By character she means stand or fall. To Babylon it was said: "The cities that they took hold after were departed from thee, and all things which were devoted and gradually are departed from thee, and thou shalt find none to save thee, not the merchants of these things which were made rich by thee, that stand after thee, for the hour of her torment. Yet for all this, how general is oppression in the earth! Every one race, not only the people of dark skin suffer. Consider other races as other hands Moabites, the country of the Amazon, Asia, Africa, Europe. Yet there is a recompense, and there is no escape. Egypt and Edom were a great oppressor. God spoke of them by the prophet: ‘I will make the Egyptians against the Egyptians; and they shall fight every one against another and every one against his neighbor, city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. Assyria was a great oppressor. Of her, it was said: ‘She will stretch out his hand against the North and destroy Assyria. and I will make Myself a sanctuary for the Wilder-" Babylon was a great oppressor. To her it

*Von Holst, pages 95-99; Page 141; Page 192.
was said: “Thus shalt be brought down to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee and consider thee saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble that did shake kingdoms; that opened not the house of his prisoners?”

We may well conclude with the words that came home to the martyred Chief Magistrate, whose portrait is not only seen in the White House at Washington, the nation’s Capital, but also in Montgomery, the Cradle of the Confederacy. “Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.” This he knew applied to the nation, as also this instruction: “The Lord require of thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?”