

REVIEW OF REVIEWS

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THE LYNCHING EVIL FROM A SOUTHERN STANDPOINT

BEGINNING with the assumption that lynching is a national evil, not confined to any one section of the country, but maintaining at the same time that this evil more vitally concerns the South than it does other parts of the country, because the greater number of lynchings occur there, Principal Robert R. Moton, of Tuskegee Institute, sets forth in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*, a representative Southern review, his views concerning the program that should be adopted to do away with the lynching evil throughout the South.

Having shown from official records that the South, with about one-half the population of the North and West, had during the past thirty years more than seven times as many lynchings as the North and West combined, and also that the decrease of lynchings has been more rapid in other parts of the country than in the South, Major Moton expresses the opinion that lynching is the chief cause of unrest among negroes. Although white persons are often put to death by mobs, lynching is proved by the statistics to be more and more confined to negroes. In the recent extensive migrations of negroes from South to North lynching was the cause most frequently stated. Beyond question it is one of the chief factors in making Southern negro labor unstable. Furthermore, it causes unrest among business, professional and property owning negroes who would naturally form the stabilizing forces in negro communities.

Major Moton concludes as the result of his own observations that this instability and unrest are tending to increase rather than to decrease, thereby greatly retarding the industrial and economic development of the South. While he believes that the South is going to need the negro as a laborer, even more in the future than she has in the past, there will be a greater demand for the negro in the North than there has been heretofore, because of the stoppage of immigration from Europe and the revival in the building industries and other lines that will follow the establishment of peace.

Major Moton notes with satisfaction the growth of sentiment in the South against lynching and the strong stand taken by such influential newspapers as the *Montgomery Advertiser*, the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Houston Post*, the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Columbia State*, the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*. Southern white people in growing

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numbers are setting their faces against the evil, speaking out and openly opposing it. A recent meeting of the Southern Sociological Congress, after strongly condemning mob rule as un-American and subversive of law and order, formulated the following program:

First, to carry on a ceaseless campaign of publicity through the public press;

Second, to send speakers to address conventions on this subject in order to enlist active support of religious, educational and other leaders;

Third, to carry on a thorough-going investigation of the causes of lynching upon the results of which will be worked out for the future a constructive program of education, legislation, and law enforcement.

Major Moton further reminds us that lynchings are now occurring for almost any cause, however trivial, that five women were lynched in 1918, and that only a small proportion of lynchings are for the "unmentionable crime." Only 25 per cent. of the persons put to death in 1918 were charged with that crime.

Believing that an important part of after-war reconstruction is to endeavor to reduce, and as far as possible to abolish every form of lawlessness, Major Moton holds that this is the most opportune time for a campaign to abolish an evil that is doing so much to hinder just and harmonious relations between the races.