

COLORED AMERICANS.

JOHN R. LYNCH'S APPEAL TO THEM.

"The Paramount Issue is the Protection of Their Own Rights."

**Ignored by the Democratic Platform — Public Declarations of Democratic Leaders,
Negro Suffrage Must be "Removed from the Body Politic" — The
False Cry of "Negro Domination" — Colored Voters
in the North Warned.**

My attention has been previously called, says John R. Lynch, Ex-Congressman from Mississippi, and now Paymaster in the U. S. V. at Santiago, to expressions from certain colored men who seem to be dissatisfied with the position of the Republican party in general and the present administration in particular, with reference to certain questions now before the public in which the colored race is vitally interested. Some of these expressions are from sources which deserve respectful consideration. They are made by men, who, I am sure, are not actuated by sordid motives or selfish considerations. Some of them have gone so far as to express the opinion that the condition of the race would be improved, at least in certain localities, if the colored vote would divide. These men are honest but mistaken. They are laboring under an erroneous impression, which, if possible, should be removed.

The principal objection urged against the Republican party by certain colored men is that it has not been sufficiently outspoken in denunciation and condemnation of lawlessness and violence and in the efforts now being made by the Democratic party to abrogate and nullify the 15th. Amendment. Every intelligent person knows that the present administration has done all that can be done under the Constitution and laws to prevent these crimes and to punish those who commit them. There are many persons, white and colored, of more than ordinary intelligence, who honestly believe that a national administration can, if it will, protect every person in the enjoyment of life, liberty and property. But those who understand our system of government know better. Under the Constitution and laws of the United States, as construed by the Supreme Court, the protection of the individual in the enjoyment of life, liberty and property comes under the police regulations of the state and that if the state can not or will not afford this protection the individual is without a remedy. This is one of the defects in our governmental system which I hope will some day be remedied. The fact has been demonstrated that the general government can not even protect a foreign subject against domestic violence in any one of the states of the American Union. That the United States government can protect any one of its citizens against violence abroad but can not protect any one of them against domestic violence when committed in any one of the states may seem strange, but it is true just the same.

CRIMES AND OUTRAGES NOT TO BE ENDORSED.

Is it reasonable to suppose that the colored voters will now endorse and approve of the crimes that some of them blame the present administration for not being able to prevent? Some colored men do

not seem to realize the fact that this is what they will be doing if they vote the Democratic ticket. I have seen a suggestion from at least one colored man for whose opinions I have great respect, that if the colored man, especially in the South, would vote the Democratic ticket, they would no doubt receive more consideration and better treatment. I assume that this suggestion was thoughtfully made and at a time when the subject had been carefully considered. Of course no colored man who is not devoid of manhood and self-respect can act upon such a suggestion. It would mean that the helpless victim should kiss the rod that smites him with the hope that he who holds it may temper the blows with mercy. It would mean a confession on the part of the colored men that they are not entitled to a voice in the government under which they live and by which they are taxed. It would be a declaration on their part that they are here by sufferance and not by law—that they are allowed to remain upon American soil as a matter of favor and not as a matter of right.

THE PARAMOUNT ISSUE FOR COLORED VOTERS.

I do not mean to say that all colored men are in accord with the Republican Party upon all public questions. Colored men are not unlike white men. There are differences among them just as there are among white men. There are some colored men, no doubt, who are in accord with Mr. Bryan and the Democratic party, especially upon such questions as expansion, the finances and the tariff. These colored men would, I am sure, vote in accordance with their views on these questions if conditions were such that they could afford to make any one of them the paramount issue. But a moment's consideration will show that this is not possible. It is no doubt true that there are many men who are not in perfect accord with the party to which they belong and for whose candidates they vote. The course usually pursued by intelligent men who are thus situated is to select some one important question or issue that they consider to be paramount to all others, and act with the party with which they find themselves in accord on that issue. This was clearly and intelligently expressed in a letter written by Hon. Carl Schurz in 1899. It was not Mr. Schurz's conclusions, but his process of reasoning that impressed me favorably. In 1896 he considered the financial question to be the paramount issue, and, finding himself in accord with the Republican party on that issue, he acted in that campaign with the Republican party. In 1900 he believes the question of expansion should be the paramount issue, and finding himself in accord with the Democratic party on that issue, he acts in this campaign with the Democratic party. It will be seen, of course, that what must necessarily be the paramount issue with the colored voters is a subordinate one with Mr. Schurz. Senator Hoar, on the other hand, who is in accord with Mr. Schurz and the Democratic party on the question of expansion, does not consider expansion to be the paramount issue. The following sentence from a speech delivered by him in the Senate expresses his views upon that question: "I am not ready to take the administration of this country from the party which for fifty years has been wrong but once, and commit it to the party which for fifty years has never once been right." The paramount issue with the colored Americans must be the protection of their own rights, which are being assailed by the Democratic party. So long as the Democratic party maintains its present attitude towards the colored Americans, the colored voters can not afford to make any other than the protection of their own rights a paramount issue. I cannot see, therefore, how any colored man can afford to act with the Democratic Party, although some of them may be in harmony with it on subordinate questions and issues.

PROPOSED DESTRUCTION OF NEGRO SUFFRAGE.

To find out the attitude of the Democratic party on the suffrage question we are obliged to look elsewhere than in their last national platform. In that document that important question is entirely ignored. But Senator Morgan of Alabama, who is one of the ablest Democrats in the Senate, and whose authority to represent and speak for his party will hardly be questioned, has recently defined the position of the Democratic party on that issue in language that can not be misunderstood. Speaking with reference to Negro suffrage, he used the following language: "It is a thorn in the flesh and will irritate and rankle until it is removed from the body politic." This is not only the opinion of Senator Morgan, it is the position of the Democratic party. The Republican party, on the other hand, in its last national platform, emphatically declared that it was the plain purpose of the 15th. Amendment to the Federal Constitution to prevent distinction on account of race or color in regulating the elective franchise, and that the devices of state governments, whether by statutory or constitutional enactments to defeat this purpose are revolutionary and should be condemned. On this important question the issue is thus clearly joined between the two great parties.

SENATOR MORGAN'S BOLD AVOWAL.

Those who believe this should be the paramount question or issue, and are in accord with the Democratic party, as defined by Senator Morgan, will vote the Democratic ticket. Those who are in accord with the Republican party as defined in the last national platform of that party, and the record and utterances of its candidates, will vote the Republican ticket. On this issue I cannot see how there can be any division among colored voters. A party that will deny justice to a part of its own people can not safely be depended upon to accord justice to any other people. At any rate, so far as the colored American is concerned, he must act upon the principle that charity begins at home.

COLORLED VOTE NOT DANGEROUS.

The assertion that the colored vote is dangerous and is a menace to good government is the reverse of true. On the contrary they are among the most conservative and reliable voters in the country. They are always on the side of law and order. They are opposed to mob law and violence. They are on the side of the business interests of the country. They are in favor of a good government and an honest administration. They believe in a sound and stable currency. They are thoroughly American, and therefore favor protection to American interests, American capital and American labor. They are opposed to the principles and doctrines of the Populists and all the other issues that are calculated to disorganize society, disarrange business or impair the credit of the government; and yet it is contended by some that this vote is dangerous and that it should be suppressed in the interest of good government and honest administration, especially in the South. It is a fact that cannot be truthfully denied that the so-called intelligent white vote of the South, in the interest of which it is contended the colored vote of that section should be suppressed, has been and is now, the principal support of those dangerous and mischievous doctrines and isms that are calculated to disturb the business interests of the country, if not destroy the credit of the government. These unwise and dangerous doctrines and principles are so strong with that class of voters that they have virtually changed the Democratic party into a Populist party. But I believe it is nothing more than fair to the Southern Democrats to say

that their position upon these questions, in my opinion, is one of expediency and not of conviction. They would be with Mr. Cleveland and against Mr. Bryan now, if they believed party success would thereby be assured.

DANGER TO NORTHERN COLORED VOTERS.

I am aware of the fact that there are some colored men in the North, East and West who contend that, whatever may happen to the colored man of the South, *they* at least are free from danger of disfranchisement. Their arguments are the same as that made by some sound money Democrats, who contend that, in consequence of Republican legislation the country would be in no danger of financial disaster even if Bryan should be elected. This is the same argument that was made by many persons in 1892 with reference to the tariff. I heard many protectionists assert that the tariff was no longer an issue, and therefore should not be discussed, because it had been settled by the passage of the McKinley bill. Of course they came to a different conclusion after the election was over, but it was then too late to prevent the disorder which came over the country as a result of that election. Colored men of the North, East and West who flatter themselves that they are free from danger because the Republican party is strong enough in those sections to save them from the fate that has overtaken the colored men of the South, forget that under a government like ours, public opinion is an important factor in shaping the policy and controlling the action of party organizations. Party managers, as a rule, are not anxious to have the organization they represent champion a cause they know to be unpopular. It is the present purpose of the leaders of the Democratic party to create a sentiment in the country that will be antagonistic to the colored man as a voter. They are trying to convince Republican leaders that the Republican party would be stronger without the colored man as an ally than it is with him. If the Republican party could be induced to take the same position towards the colored race as that now occupied by the Democratic party, is there an intelligent person who entertains a doubt as to what the result would be? The 15th. Amendment would be repealed inside of two years, and the colored men of the North East and West would find themselves in the same helpless position as the colored men in the South. In fact it would not be necessary to wait until the Amendment is repealed. All that would be necessary would be to pass laws or amend state constitutions in such a way as will, in effect, nullify and abrogate the 15th. Amendment, just as has been done in Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina.

The attitude of the Republican party towards the colored race is all that has prevented this from being done in other sections of the country. The colored man's only safety is in the Republican party. If it has not done all it could have done and should have done for the colored race, it has done all that has been done. It found the colored man a slave; it made him a free man. It found him a chattel; it made him a soldier. It found him a serf; it made him a citizen. It found him a vassal; it made him a man. It found him a dependent menial; it made him an independent sovereign. The work of the Republican party, as the champion and defender of equal civil and political rights, is one of the brightest and most brilliant pages in the history of that grand and magnificent organization. The colored American can not do better than to remain true and loyal to the party of liberty, justice and equal rights for all American citizens under the law.

