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JULY 1903



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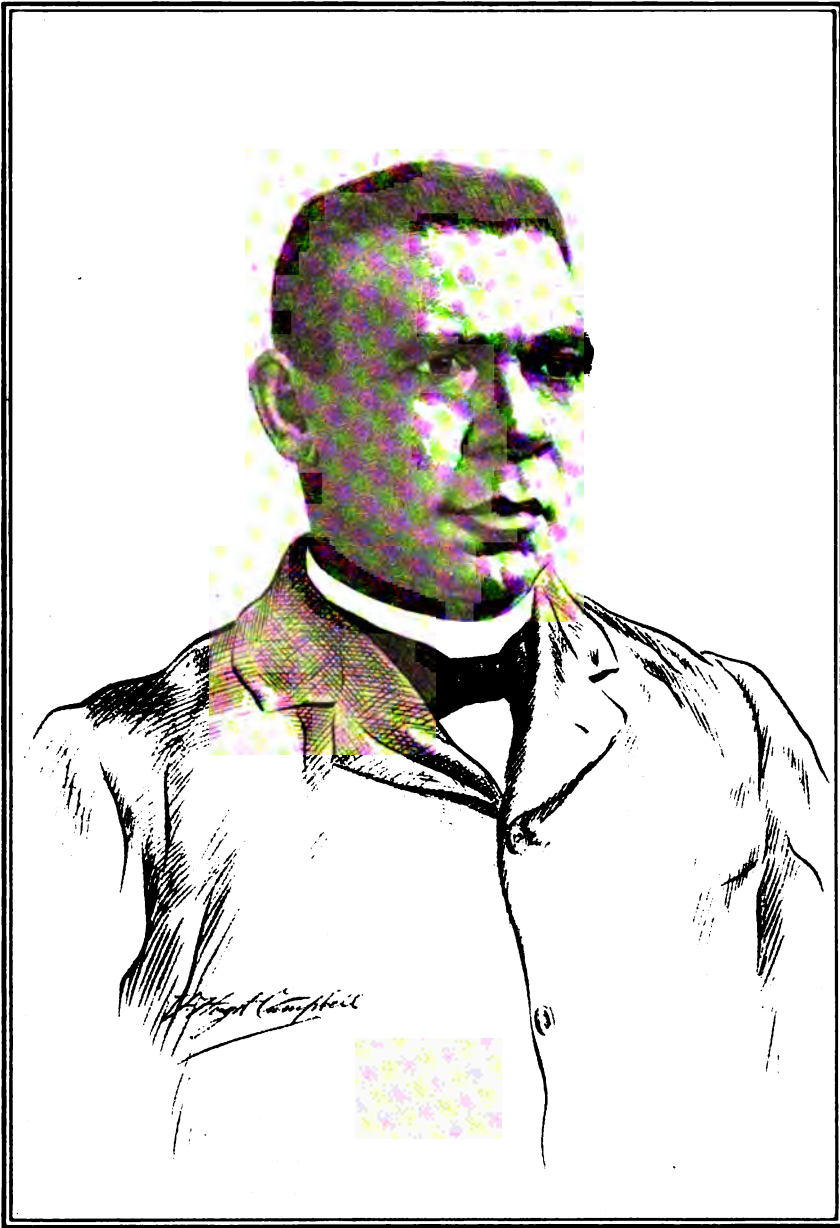
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*From photograph by Gutekunst*

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON



# POSSIBILITIES *of the* NEGRO

## *The* ADVANCE GUARD *of the* RACE

It is usually considered that Negroes are today contributing practically nothing of importance to American civilization; that only one or two individuals of Negro blood have so risen above the average of the nation as rightly to be judged men of mark. Nor is this assumption to be wondered at, for in the world of work men are not labeled by color. When, then, the average American rushes to his telephone there is nothing in the look of the transmitter to tell him that it is part product of a Negro brain; when the whizz of the engine weaves cloth, drags trains, and does other deeds of magic, it does not tell the public that the oil which smooths its turning is the composition of a black man; if the medical student reads in DaCosta of the skilled surgeon who recently sewed up a hole in a living man's heart he will not read that the surgeon was colored; the wanderer amid the beauties of the Luxemburg is not apt to know from the dark hues of the "Raising of Lazarus" the still darker hues of its painter; and it was a Texas girl who naïvely remarked: "I used to read Dunbar a good deal until I found out that he was a nigger."

Such ignorance of the work of black men is natural. A man works with his hands and not with his complexion, with his brains and not with his facial angle; and the result of his work is human achievement and not necessarily a "social problem." Thus his work becomes gathered up and lost in the sum of American deeds, and men know little of the individual. Consequently the average American, accus-

tomed to regarding black men as the outer edge of humanity, not only easily misses seeing the colored men who have accomplished something in the world common to both races, but also misses entirely the work of the men who are developing the dark and isolated world of the black man.

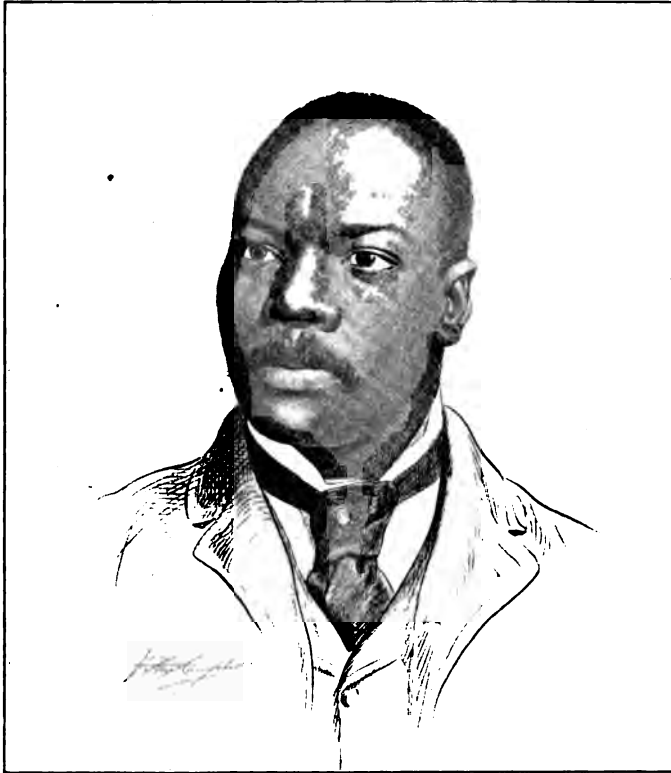
So here I am seeking to bring to mind something of what men of African blood are today doing in America, by selecting as types ten living Negroes who in ability and quite regardless of their black blood have raised themselves to a place distinctively above the average of mankind. Just how far they have risen I am not attempting to say, for human accomplishment is a thing difficult to judge; and peculiarly difficult in the case of people whose ability and worth is a matter of hot questioning between friends who exaggerate and foes who persistently belittle. I do not say, then, how much of genius or transcendent ability these men have; I do say that measured by any fair standard of human accomplishment they are distinctively men of mark, and that they all have enough black blood in their veins to disfranchise them in Alabama.

Of the fields of endeavor conspicuously open to Americans there are four chief groups: the field of commerce and industry, in which this land has gained worldwide preëminence; the field of political life, in the governing of a continent and seventy millions under republican forms; the field of the learned professions—law, medicine, preaching, and teaching; and, finally, the paths of literature and art, as expressive of

the mighty life of a new world. In these four lines of striving the men I notice work.

In commerce and industry the Negro started as the dumb-driven tobacco-hand and cotton raiser—the bottom of the system, without apparent initiative or mechanical ingenuity. Yet today partial records of the United States Patent Office show that 357 patents are known to have been

apparatus, four electric railway improvements, two electric brakes, a telephone system, a battery, and a tunnel construction for electric roads. His telephone transmitter was assigned to the Bell Telephone Company, and is in use by them. Many of his other inventions have found wide currency, as for instance, the electrical controller system used on the Manhattan Elevated Railway. Mr. Woods was



*From photograph by Eddowes Brothers*

GRANVILLE T. WOODS  
ELECTRICIAN

granted Negroes, covering all fields of mechanical contrivances. Foremost among living Negro inventors are Woods and McCoy. The latter is the pioneer in the matter of machinery lubricators; the former is a skilled electrician. Granville T. Woods has patented thirty-five devices; they began with a steam boiler furnace in 1884, and include four kinds of telegraphing

born forty-four years ago, and although he had his difficulties, yet a man with so rare a gift of mechanical ingenuity could hardly be kept back by the handicap of color.

On the other hand, in the world of commerce and business, where men work elbow to elbow and come in close personal touch, there is room for the very effective bar of race prejudice, especially on account of the

large part conscious selection plays. A business man may be looking for talent, but he does not look for it in his black office boy or porter; and even if signs of it appear, he is usually certain that he must be deceived—that it is the “imitative” gift only. Consequently the Negro, being a small consumer, is almost shut out of the white business system, and can only enter the business field among his own people,

bellum times drove them out of business and gave their sons no opportunity to enter the new system save as menials. Today it is the small retail business and coöperative enterprise of various kinds that is opening new fields which the Negro is entering.

In 1881 a Virginia Negro organized a mutual benefit insurance society in Richmond, with a capital of \$150 and one hundred members. Today the “True



*Photograph by Gilbert and Bacon*

## EDWARD H. MORRIS

LAWYER

and then in the face of ruthless and skilled competition. For such reasons the Negro business man has developed slowly, and has only reached conspicuous success in cases where special circumstances gave him a chance to stand against competition. The skill of the Philadelphia and New York caterers gave them a chance before the war, but the large capitalism of post-

Reformers,” under the presidency of Mr. W.L. Taylor, the successor of the originator, has 50,000 members and \$223,500 in real estate; it has paid \$2,000,000 in insurance claims, and has established, besides its main business, a bank, a real estate department, a weekly newspaper, an Old Folks’ Home, five grocery and general merchandise stores, and a hotel. Such a phenomenal growth,



*From photograph by Gutekunst*

HENRY OSSAWA TANNER  
ARTIST



when one considers the material and the opportunity, means unusual ability of management; and it seems fair to rate the president and chief director of this remarkable business as a person of more than average ability according to any standard. To be sure, the organization has undoubtedly stormy times ahead, and yet it is already over twenty years of age, and weathered with conspicuous success the storm of 1893. The savings bank department was opened in 1889 with \$4000 capital. Today the bank has 10,000 depositors, and had done a business up to December, 1900, of \$7,426,450.92. The real estate department was established in 1882. It now owns fifteen halls, three farms, two dwellings, and one hotel, and holds fourteen halls on lease. The *Reformer*, which is their weekly paper, has a circulation of 8000 copies. A farm for the Old Folks' Home has been bought for \$14,000, and a small town laid out. The latest department is the mercantile and industrial association; this association conducts stores in Richmond, Washington, Manchester, Portsmouth, and Roanoke, and these stores did a combined business of \$75,000 in 1901. They are rated as "O. K." by the mercantile agencies, and are on a strictly cash basis.

Turning now to the field of political and social activity we may note a long line of Negroes conspicuous in the past, beginning with Toussaint L'Ouverture, American by influence if not by birth, and going past Alexander Hamilton, whose drop of African fire quite recently sent Mrs. Atherton into hysterics, down to Purvis, Nell, Douglass, and Bruce. All these are dead, and today, strange as the assertion may seem, the leading Negro political leader is Booker T. Washington. Mr. Washington is not a teacher; he has spent little time in the class-room; he is not the originator or chief exponent of the educational system which he so fervently defends. He is primarily the political leader of the New Commercial South, and the greatest of such leaders since Appomattox. His ability has been shown not so much in his educational campaign, nor in his moral earnestness, as in the marvelous facility by which he has so manipulated the forces of a strained political and social situation as to bring about among the factors the greatest

consensus of opinion in this country since the Missouri Compromise. He has done this by applying American political and business methods to an attempted solution of the Negro problem. Realizing the great truth that the solution of this vexed question demands above all that somehow, sometime, the southern whites and blacks must agree and sympathize with each other, Mr. Washington started to advertise broadly his proposed basis of agreement so that men might understand it. With this justification, he advertised with a thoroughness that astonished the nation. At the same time he kept his hand on the pulse of North and South, advancing with every sign of good will and generosity, and skilfully retreating to silence or shrewd disclaimer at any sign of impatience or turmoil. The playing of this game has been simply wonderful, the success phenomenal. To be sure not all men like the outcome, not all men fail to see the terrible dangers of this effort at compromise. Some have felt it their duty to speak strongly against Mr. Washington's narrow educational program, and against the danger of his apparent surrender of certain manhood rights which seem to be absolutely essential to race development and national weal; and above all, against his failure to speak a strong, true note for justice and right; but all this is beside the object of this paper. Of Mr. Washington's great ability as a politic leader of men there can scarce be two opinions. He is manifestly one of the greatest living southerners, and one of the most remarkable of Americans.

It must not be thought that with this new political leadership the old political activity has stopped. The Negro is not eliminated from politics and never will be; he is simply passing through a new phase of the exercise of his political power. Here and there in the legislation of the land his work and influence may still be felt. It has been said several times in various places that the keenest and, in many respects, the most able member of the last Illinois legislature was a Negro lawyer, Edward H. Morris. Mr. Morris represented the richest legislative district in Illinois, the First; on some occasions he presided over the deliberations of the House; he was chairman of the important committee on elections, member of five or six of the other

leading committees, and also a member of the steering committee of the Republican party. Born in Kentucky forty-five years ago, he was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty-one, and since then, in the severe competition of a great city, handicapped by color, he has become one of the strong members of the western bar, with a practice of at least \$20,000 a year. Many people will qualify their admiration for the

of the civil-rights legislation, his winning of the suit between Cook County and the city of Chicago, and also of the test case over the taxation of the net receipts on insurance companies.

Continuing in the field of the learned professions it should be noted that no single sign of Negro progress has been of such marked significance as the rise of the Negro physician in the last ten years. The



*Photograph by Scott*

DANIEL H. WILLIAMS  
SURGEON

unquestionable ability of Mr. Morris by a wish that he was less closely identified with the Chicago political machine, or that his great skill as a lawyer had not been used to free tax-collector Gunning from the toils of the law, or to draw up that marvel of ingenuity, the Illinois municipal ownership bill. On the other hand, Mr. Morris may point with real satisfaction to his defence

really striking fact about the recent post-office case at Indianola was the driving out of a successful Negro physician, who was crowding the white physicians to the wall, at the same time with the post-mistress. It was but a short time ago that a Negro led his class at the Harvard Medical School, and another one in Philadelphia passed the best medical examination in many years

under the State authorities. By far the most conspicuous of Negro physicians, for his skill as a surgeon and his unique contributions to science, is Dr. Daniel H. Williams, of Chicago. Dr. Williams, born in Pennsylvania in 1858, is attending surgeon to the Cook County and Provident hospitals in Chicago, and was formerly at the head of the Freedman's Hospital in Washington. In 1893 Dr.

suture ever recorded." So said the *Medical Record*, of March 27, 1897. The case attracted the attention of the medical world, as have several other cases of Dr. Williams. It was only last summer that the *Charlotte Medical Journal* of North Carolina published a violent article against Negro physicians, stating that the formation of the Negro head was such that they could never hope to gain efficiency in such a pro-



Photograph by Edmondson

### CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUTT

NOVELIST

Williams operated upon a stab wound of the heart which had pierced the pericardium; the operation was successful, and the patient was known to be alive three years afterward. "Official records do not give a single title descriptive of suture of the pericardium or heart in the human subject. This being the fact, this case is the first successful or unsuccessful case of

fession. About the same time the editors, *Doctors Register* and *Montgomery*, were writing the following letter to Dr. Williams in blissful ignorance of his race:

"We have just read a paper of yours entitled 'A Report of Two Cases of Cesarean section under Positive Indications with Termination in Recovering' that was recently published in *Obstetrics*. You are



*From photograph by Scurlock*

**PROFESSOR KELLY MILLER**  
**MATHEMATICIAN**

an attractive writer. Is it possible for us to get you to do a little editorial writing for us?"

Turning now to the professions of teaching and preaching we must expect here a limited development in certain directions; for the Negro teacher is almost invariably confined in his work to Negro schools where the pay is small, the tasks excessive, and the grades low. No matter how much promise a Negro student may show, the path of scholarship is closed to him in most cases: he can practically never be made assistant or tutor with time for study and research. Thus a man like Kelly Miller can only by dint of extraordinary exertion rise above the average of teachers. He was born two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, and early showed even in the wretched country schools of South Carolina a mathematical mind of unusual keenness; but few careers are open to a Negro in mathematics, be he ever so skilful. To be sure, he studied at the Naval Observatory and in the post-graduate school of Johns Hopkins—politely unwelcomed. Eventually he became a professor in Howard University—at a small salary, with much work, and in a position where prospective revenue from students did not attract text-publishers to his really good work in mathematics. Despite all this he rose slowly, steadily—as a writer on mathematical subjects, as a student of race problems, as a social leader of that group of 90,000 black folk at the nation's capital, who are in many respects the advance guard of nine millions. His subtle, forceful articles have been read in the *Forum*, the *Outlook*, and the *Dial*; his voice and peculiar power of argument and expression have been heard before many noted clubs and gatherings, and his recent monograph for the United States Bureau of Education is of exceptional value. Far beyond, however, this record of tangible work stands the forceful personality of a clean-hearted, clear-witted man—an inspirer of youth, a leader of his people, and one who is coming slowly to be recognized as a notable American.

The Negro in this land has produced many ministers of religion of considerable power, from Richard Allen and James Varick to Lemuel Haynes and Highland Garnett. But I have chosen as typifying

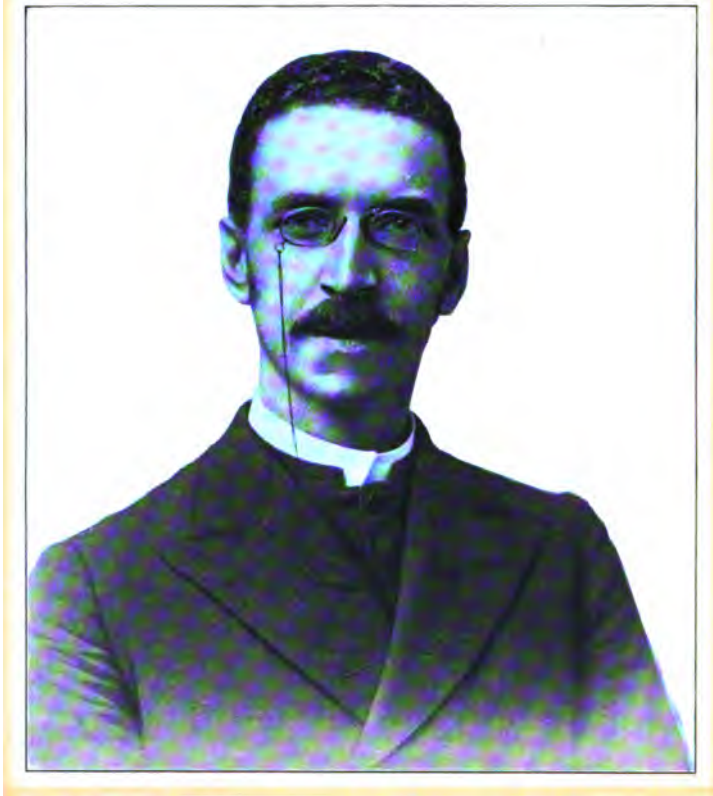
the Negro minister, not one of its forceful orators and organizers—one of that peculiar dynasty of the socio-religious Negro church who have built up this powerful organization—but rather a moral regenerator, an inspirer of ideal Christian living, such as the world, even in its most callous days, has ever recognized and honored. Of such sort were Daniel Payne, the Little Father of a million African Methodists, and Alexander Crummell, the master Christian. These have passed, and their mantle of moral earnestness and impeccable character falls worthily on Francis J. Grimke. In Washington there stands a small red church on Fifteenth Street, well worth your visiting. It was one of the earliest tangible protests of the better part of the Negro world against noise and emotionalism in religion. The children of its founders and their children's children have worshiped here until it has grown to be in a special sense the moral center of black Washington. Here, if you sit of a Sunday morning, you will see immediately the perfect earnestness and moral fervor of the tall, thin preacher whose stern, carved lineaments are so impressive; and you will hear a simple, clear-cut sermon with fearless conclusions. It will be easy for you to see the influence for goodness and truth and purity that now for full twenty-one years has gone forth from these lips and out from these low doors; perhaps some time in life you may learn how the influence of this one man, and of her whom God joined to him, has in the course of half a century of life, through the medium of a pure home, a righteous church, and unquestioned personal integrity, so built itself into the lives and hearts of a myriad of men and women as to make the world visibly better for their living.

The late Dr. McCosh considered Mr. Grimke, when studying at Princeton, "as able and promising a student as any we had," and the same kind of testimony has followed his life work as pastor, as school commissioner of the District of Columbia, as trustee of Howard University, and as preacher at Hampton and Tuskegee. "I do not really know whether I have done anything worth mentioning or not," he said once; "I have thought of but one thing—the work, in which I have been deeply, profoundly interested. I have

longed with all my heart to be of service to our poor, struggling race, and have labored as best I could to help it in the effort which it is making to rise. No one has felt more keenly than I have the wrongs that have been perpetrated upon us and are still being perpetrated upon us in this country. In spite of all the tremendous odds against us, I am not disposed, however, to become despondent. I have faith

faintest doubt as to the outcome, if we will trust in God and do our level best." So are the souls tuned who will yet make the Negro race the salt of this poor earth.

Thus we have striven in the world of work. But the Negro, as the world has yet to learn, is a child of the spirit, tropical in birth and imagination, and deeply sensitive to all the joy and sorrow and beauty of life. His message to the world, when



*Photograph by Rice*

FRANCIS JAMES GRIMKE  
CLERGYMAN

in God; faith in the race; and faith in the ultimate triumph of right.

' Be strong !

It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,  
How hard the battle goes, the day, how long.  
Faint not, fight on ! Tomorrow comes the song.'

It is in this faith that I am living and moving and working. I have not the

it comes in fullness of speech and conscious power, will be the message of the artist, not that of the politician or shop-keeper. Already now, and in the past, have flashed faint forerunners, half-conscious of the message in them, choked at times by its very fervor: Phillis, the crude singer, Aldridge, the actor, Burleigh, and Rosamond Johnson. Over the sea the masters

have appeared—Poushkin and Dumas and Coleridge Taylor—aye, and Robert Browning, of whose black blood the world but whispers. Here in America three artists have risen to places of recognized importance—Dunbar, the poet; Chesnutt, the novelist; and Tanner, the painter.

Widely different are these men in origin and method. Dunbar sprang from slave parents and poverty; Chesnutt from free

a year for scribbling about black folk? Of the dozens of colored men who, if encouraged, might have thought and painted and sung, these three alone pressed on, refusing lightly to be turned aside.

So out of the heart of Dunbar bubbled the lyrics of lowly life—in inimitable rhythm and beauty, with here and there a tinge of the sorrow songs. Tanner painted slowly, carefully, with infinite pains and alluring



*Photograph by Baker*

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

POET

parents and thrift; while Tanner was a bishop's son. To each came his peculiar temptation—to Dunbar the blight of poverty and sordid surroundings; to Tanner the active discouragement of men who smiled at the idea of a Negro wanting to paint pictures instead of fences; and to Chesnutt the temptation of money making—why leave some thousands of dollars

color, deeply original and never sensational, until his pictures hang in many of the world's best galleries. Chesnutt wrote powerfully, but with great reserve and suggestiveness, touching a new realm in the borderland between the races and making the world listen with one short story.

These are the men. But already you are impatient with a question, "How much



*From photograph by Newton*

PROFESSOR W. E. BURGHARDT DU BOIS  
SOCIOLOGIST



Negro blood have they?" The attitude of the American mind toward the mulatto is infinitely funny. Mixture of blood is dire damnation, cry the men who did the mixing, and then if a prophet arise within the Veil or a man of any talent—"That is due to his mixed blood," cry the same men. If, however, we study cases of ability and goodness and talent among the American Negroes, we shall have difficulty in laying down any clear thesis as to the effect of amalgamation. As a matter of historic fact the colored people of America have produced as many remarkable black men as mulattoes. Of the men I have named, three are black, two are brown, two are half white, and three are three-fourths white. Many of those with white blood had one or two generations' start of the others, because their parents or grandparents were natural children of rich Southerners, who sent them North and educated them while the black men toiled in the fields. Then, too, the mulatto is peculiarly the child of the city; probably two-thirds of the city colored people are of mixed blood; and it is the city that inspires and educates the lowly and opens the doors of opportunity. If we choose among these men the two of keenest intellect, one is black and the other is brown; if we choose the three of strongest character, two are yellow and one is black. If we choose three according to their esthetic sensibility, one is black, one is yellow, and one is three-fourths white. And so on. Let wise men decide from such cases the exact effect of race mixture, for I cannot.

But what has this to do with the main point? The fact remains that these men, all of them, are representatives of the American Negroes, and whether they represent the five million black, or the four million brown, yellow, and white hosts of this group, they all equally represent those who suffer from caste proscription, from political disability, and wanton narrowing of opportunity. And against this injustice their lives make eloquent and ringing protest.

*W. E. Burghardt Du Bois*

(Atlanta University)

## A Note on Dr. Du Bois

A survey of the notable achievements of men of Negro blood would be sadly incomplete if it failed to include a word regarding the career of the author of the foregoing article. His influence in promoting the highest interests of his race is hardly less potent than that of the distinguished principal of Tuskegee Institute.

In preparing for his life-work Dr. Du Bois enjoyed the largest opportunities which the highest type of education can offer. He is a Harvard man with the added advantage of the impress of a great German university. Since 1896 he has held the chair of sociology in Atlanta University.

It would not have been surprising if this broadly cultured scholar had developed a sense of detachment from the interests of his race, but instead he has dedicated his best powers most unreservedly to the service of his people. The race discussion has hitherto been characterized by a superfluity of prejudice and a dearth of exact information. The most sweeping generalizations have been made by the "car-window sociologists." But now the investigations of Dr. Du Bois have applied the methods of exact statistical science to the examination of the Negro problem. The rhetorician with his theory is at last confronted by the scientist with his facts. Furthermore, this man who has the facts is competent to interpret them. He understands the view-point of the white race as thoroughly as he knows the needs of the Negro.

His recent book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, reveals the range of his power. As you read, you recognize the impartial historian, the sober statistician, the fearless critic of men and systems. But you discover also a man of fine poetic temperament who is able to step aside from economic discussion to lead you "within the Veil, raising it that you may view faintly its deeper recesses—the meaning of its religion, the passion of its human sorrow, and the struggle of its greater souls." His economic science is not invalidated by his poetic strain, and the imaginative touch in his work reveals the secret of the influence of this scholarly leader upon a people whose emotions are strongly developed.—EDITOR.