THE PROPOSED SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE COLLEGE

ONE of Whittier's poems—*The Black Boy of Atlanta*—is founded on an incident which occurred shortly after the war between the North and the South in America. General O. O. Howard, a well-known public philanthropist of the North, entered a small Negro school in Atlanta known as Storr's School, out of which has grown the present Atlanta University. After a hymn had been sung, he said, "What message shall I give to my boys from you when I get back to Washington?" There was a dead silence, when for the second time the question was asked. Then up sprang from a far corner of the room a small youth, who in a shrill voice cried out: "Massa, tell them we're rising."

That is the message the Natives of South Africa would send across the seas to-day to all who are interested in their progress. Most emphatically they are rising. Here are a few signs of their progress. The first school for Natives in the Cape Colony was opened a little over eighty years ago—to-day there are 106,500 Native pupils in Government-aided schools in that Province alone, besides some thousands more in non-aided institutions. In the Transvaal and Orange Free State, where fifty years ago the idea of a Native being taught to read and write was unheard of, there are now over twenty-two thousand under instruction in Government-supported schools. In Rhodesia twenty years ago no school existed—to-day there are two hundred and thirteen with a total enrolment of 14,652. And if to these we add the Native school enrolment of Natal, Basutoland, and the other Native Territories, we shall reach a grand total of not less than two hundred thousand.

The first Native newspaper in South Africa was established in 1884. To-day there are seven weekly newspapers with Native proprietors, Native managers, and Native editors. Native ministers may be numbered by hundreds, Native school teachers by thousands, many of them men of culture, commanding the respect of Europeans as well as of men of their own race. In Natal there is a flourishing institution conducted on the line of Tuskegee by a pure Zulu, a former student of Oberlin College. In Pretoria are two Native barristers who have obtained their legal training in London; and last year, to the great joy of his people, a Native, Dr. Rubusana, was elected to the Provincial Council of the Cape of Good Hope Province. These are only a few signs of the awakening to national consciousness which has begun amongst the South African Native tribes, but they will suffice to indicate the circumstances out of which has sprung the movement in favour of the establishment of a South African Native College.

The founding of such an institution was first recommended by the South African Inter-Colonial Native Affairs Commission in 1905. This Commission, whose *personnel* won for it the confidence of the entire country, spent two years in hearing the evidence of those qualified by experience to speak on Native affairs and in studying first-hand the Native situation as it then was. The publication of their Report, in which they stated their conviction that there existed a pressing need for the establishment of an institution to give greater facilities for higher education to Natives, led to a remarkable demonstration on the part of the more advanced Natives, and meetings were held in practically every district of the country in favour of the proposed College. Nor was their enthusiasm confined to speech-making and newspaper articles, for in the following year the Transkeian Territories General Council, a Native Body representing nearly one million Natives living in the Eastern Province of the Cape Colony, voted a sum of ten thousand pounds towards its establishment, the greater part of which has already been paid up. Promises of other large amounts followed, while smaller sums, in some instances amounting to one hundred pounds, were collected in the form

of small donations or as proceeds of entertainments and church collections by individual Natives. Since then additional large contributions have been promised subject to certain conditions, and an Executive Board has been appointed by the representatives of these monies to act as Trustees of this Fund, to lay down the policy to be followed in the proposed institution, and to negotiate with the Governments and other interested bodies with a view to its establishment. It is true that the great political movement which last year led to the Union of South Africa has relegated to the background the question of Native education, but there are indications that public interest in the matter is again growing, and the promoters of the scheme anticipate that definite steps will be taken in the immediate future to establish the College.

Now public opinion in South Africa is still sharply divided upon the subject of Native education. For while the more intelligent interest that has been taken of recent years in the Native question and the influence of such men as Lord Selborne and Sir Matthew Nathan have considerably diminished the ranks of those who meet every argument in favour of helping the Native with "Teach the Nigger to work," or some similar shibboleth, there are still many thoughtful South Africans who are convinced that it is not in the interests of the country—of the Natives as well as of the European—to give to the former more than a very elementary education. There are also many, chiefly industrial and professional workers, who resent the progress made in Native education because they believe that it is leading to future Native competition in fields of labour which they have hitherto regarded as their own preserves. No trade unionist is allowed to do skilled labour for firms which employ coloured hands at the same kind of work, and any baker, printer, or similar worker who engages himself to teach Natives at one or other of the mission industrial schools incurs by so doing the odium of the other members of his trade. The Transvaal Bar too has recently drawn up the constitution of a Society of Advocates for the South African Union, to which the other Provincial Bars, excepting, it is

stated, that of the Western Province, have agreed. By this document all Natives are to be excluded (as far as the Society will have power to prevent them) from practising as barristers. A few years ago a friend of mine, a Resident Magistrate of many years' experience in Native districts, and himself the son of a missionary, said to my small son one morning, "You won't bless your father for the work he is doing, when you grow up." And he was not expressing his own views only, but the views of a large section of the population, who really seem to tremble for the supremacy of the White man should the Native once be in a position to compete with him.

To those who adopt this attitude one might well point out that if history teaches us one lesson more clearly than another it is this: that the nation alone prospers which puts righteousness and justice before all other considerations in dealing with backward or subject races; that the Native as a taxpayer has an equal right with the European to whatever provision Government is making in support of higher education; that for a White race to fear Native competition in any work requiring the exercise of mental and moral powers is rather a sign of its degeneracy than of that superiority which it so confidently asserts. But the strongest argument in favour of granting higher education to the Natives of South Africa is the fact that, whether the European population of the country care for it or not, *the Natives are determined to obtain it*. Lacking facilities in their own country, many of them have gone and are going outside South Africa. They are in Edinburgh, at Colwyn Bay (North Wales), and in London. They are in different Canadian institutions and at the various Negro Universities and Colleges in the United States of America. A few years ago the Cape Colony Education Department made enquiries and obtained particulars of about one hundred who within the previous few years had gone to America from the Cape Colony alone. At a recent Missionary Conference of the Anglican Church, held at Bloemfontein, it was stated that when Lord Milner was High Commissioner he had instituted official enquiries and found that about four hundred had left South Africa. Other figures above and below this last number have been given by other authorities.

It seems therefore an established fact that during the last few years some hundreds of Native students have gone out of this country in search of an education they are unable to obtain here. And they are still going.

What does this mean?

Some of them fall victims to the temptations of life in the larger cities of America and Europe. One instance of this, recently reported to me, is that of the son of a fairly influential Zulu chief who was sent to one of the American Colleges. But he never got there; for on his arrival in New York he got into the company of the lowest class of Whites, and after spending some years in the society of criminals and prostitutes he returned home to Natal, and now lusts after every White woman he sees. Others go to inferior schools and institutions, so-called Universities, and return the proud possessors of worthless degrees and diplomas, to be the envy of their friends but of no use to their people. Others, again, of whom I have met several, and who, I believe, form the majority, return with a commendable degree of culture, having benefited by the thorough training of a good College. And yet, perhaps, these may be a source of greater danger to the welfare of the country than the former. They return, well-educated, cultured, sensitive men, to find themselves not only out of touch with members of their own race and out of correspondence with Native environment, but without any hope of obtaining that recognition among the Europeans of this country which they have probably enjoyed abroad. I think at this moment of one who went to Edinburgh for his education. While in residence there he enjoyed the friendship of several well-to-do families, who entertained him hospitably at their homes. On completing his studies he returned to South Africa, full of hope and with high ideals for the future of his race. He landed at Capetown and drove to a hotel. But he was turned away immediately, and was told: "We don't take any niggers here." The consequence is he has become embittered and filled with race-hatred. Wherever he goes he sows the seeds of discord and race-enmity. It may not be possible to give to Natives in South Africa the same social status that they enjoy in England; but we need not be

surprised if they feel the difference and resent it. And owing, as they do, all they are and all they have in the matter of education to another country and another Government, is it any wonder they should teach their fellow-Natives here to look to England and to America rather than to South Africa for help and sympathy in their efforts to raise themselves in the scale of civilisation? In every important district of the Union, in the Cape Province, in Natal, in Basutoland, Bechuanaland, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, Natives are being taught that salvation is to be looked for not from the Union of South Africa, but rather from America and England. If South Africa desires peace and quietness in the future, she should make every effort—no matter what the cost may be—to win the confidence of her Native races and to convince them that in the European population of the country they will find a people determined to see justice and righteousness done and desirous of helping them to rise from the degradation of heathenism.

But there is a further reason why the scheme for the establishment of an institution for the higher education of the Natives should enjoy the sympathy and support of all well-wishers of South Africa. In recent years the Natives have shown in an unmistakable manner that they intend to choose as their leaders men of their own race. The formation of independent Native churches and all the separatist organisations usually denoted by the term "Ethiopianism" are nothing but the half-articulate expression of a national consciousness which is in process of birth. I felt this a few weeks ago, while attending the funeral of the leader of one of these separatist Native Churches, in a way difficult to explain but not easy to forget. It was not the great numbers who were present, belonging to different tribes and different denominations, though it was the largest funeral I had seen in the district; nor was it their wild abandonment to grief and the uncontrolled expression of their loss: it was something more subtle. Now and then one was sensible of an undertone of pride, a spirit in the crowds which seemed to be saying "... and he was one of ourselves."

This national feeling, for it is nothing less, has quite recently manifested itself in two rather striking ways. In 1905 the first General Missionary Conference of South Africa, representative of all the Protestant missionary bodies in the country, met at Johannesburg. No Natives were invited. A considerable portion of the time of the Conference was devoted to discussing the growth of "Ethiopianism" and the evils resulting from the creation of independent Native Church organisations. In the Constitution of the Conference, which was drawn up later, provision was made for admitting, but to a very limited extent, Native ministers and missionaries. Two such Conferences have since been held, one again at Johannesburg and the other at Bloemfontein, the latter in 1909. At each of these a few Native ministers were present as delegates. But this year the initiative has been taken by the Natives. A Constitution has been drawn up for a *Native* General Missionary Conference, representative of all the Protestant societies in the country, which is to hold its first meeting at Bloemfontein towards the end of this year. Now it is to be noticed that this step has not been taken by the leaders of the independent Native Churches, though they are evidently co-operating in the organization. The leading men in the matter are ministers connected for years with European missionary bodies. The President is a well-known and highly-respected Congregational minister. The Honorary Secretary is an equally worthy minister of the United Free Church of Scotland. But they are all Natives, and have agreed upon a basis for united action in missionary matters, a national, a colour basis, which may before long be adopted for the foundation of a National Native Church.

The second indication of this spirit which is stirring the people is the formation within the last few months of a South African Native Political Association, into which are to be merged the many existing local and tribal organizations of the same character. The power of the sentiment which has made such a union or absorption possible can be appreciated by those who know the extent and depth of the jealousy and rivalry which have in the past kept these bodies apart. They could never be induced to combine, and in consequence their action was

never really effective. This new Association, which is to have as its first President the only Native member of a South African Provincial Council, Dr. Rubusana, hopes to make itself the mouthpiece of Native opinion and sentiment on all social and political questions. It is reported that some of its leaders intend to agitate for the legalization of polygamous marriages among Natives. If this is the case, it will be the first Native organization to take action along non-Christian lines.

No doubt the object lesson of the Act of Union has not been lost on the Natives, but more than this the feeling that this Union was a Union of the two great European races in the country, in which they, the Natives, had neither part nor lot, has made them think that it is now their turn. While the Draft South Africa Act was being discussed throughout the country it was noticeable that at most of the Native meetings the general feeling coincided with the view expressed by one speaker I heard. It was to this effect: "This Union is a good thing for the White men. It may be a Union against us, therefore let us follow the example of our masters and combine among ourselves."

Now if this national movement among the South African Natives is to proceed along safe lines and be of real benefit to them, it is essential that those who lead it should be men who are in touch with their own people, and also men who sympathetically understand the attitude of the White population towards political and social questions as affecting Natives. And unfortunately those who obtain their education and professional training in England or America are not likely to possess either of these essential qualifications. If, however, a College for Natives were established in South Africa, where their legitimate aspirations for higher education might be gratified and the future leaders of the race given the best possible training under the influence of earnest, cultured men, there would be some reason for hoping that, under men of character and intellect, of wide sympathies and with full knowledge of European modes of thought, the Natives would advance to whatever destiny lies before them, while those points at which friction between White and Black is possible

would grow fewer, instead of rapidly increasing as they are at present.

When the establishment of a Native College began to be discussed in its practical details, it was at first proposed that the Governments should subsidise one of the existing large missionary institutions and thus enable it to carry on this advanced and specialised work. It was, however, decided that a new foundation would be necessary, an institution which might start untrammelled by connection with any Church organization, and which would also be free to evolve a policy of its own suited to the special needs of South Africa. At the same time it was felt that to be in close proximity and in living touch with one of these Native educational centres would be invaluable to such an institution in winning for it in its opening years the confidence of the Natives. Both Native and European contributors agreed to select a site near Lovedale. It was felt that Lovedale held a unique position in the affections of the Natives, and had also won to a remarkable degree the confidence of the best type of South African. Certainly if the proposed College secures the Native support which has been given in the past to Lovedale, its influence over Native life will be incalculable. At present there are at Lovedale between seven and eight hundred students drawn from every part of South Africa, representing every tribe and every Church organization. They come from as far north as Madagascar and Nyasaland, from Barotseland and other parts of Northern Rhodesia; from Lake Ng'ami in the West, from Chinde and Lourenço Marques in the East; while the Transvaal, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, the Orange Free State, Natal, and every district of the Cape Province are well represented.

It is intended that the full and undivided control of the College shall be placed in the hands of its Governing Council. This body will include representatives of Government, who will, it is hoped, be the Ministers or Officials responsible for Education and Native Affairs. The trustees, European and Native, of the money contributed towards the establishment of the College will be represented, and also the University, the Churches co-operating in the scheme, and the schools

preparing for entrance to it. It is intended to make the Council so representative and so strong that it will enjoy the confidence of both races in exercising full control over the policy of the institution, the drawing-up of its courses, the appointment of its Staff, and in all arrangements of inspection and examination.

While the College as a Government Institution cannot undertake distinctively religious work, it is the intention of its promoters that it shall have a decidedly Christian tone. It is hoped that the Council will appoint to its Staff men not only of scholarship and experience, but also of earnestness and high moral character. The distinctively religious teaching will be given outside the College in the denominational hostels which the several Churches have been invited to build for the accommodation and religious instruction of their respective students. The Anglican Church, the Wesleyan Church, and the Presbyterians have already expressed their desire to build such hostels.

With respect to its educational policy the Executive Board has been instructed by the Conference of guarantors to the fund for establishing the College to see that from its commencement the proposed institution shall be adapted to the educational needs of the Natives, and, proceeding where necessary upon tentative lines, shall be gradually developed into a College of University standing. It is desired to make provision for any Native capable and desirous of benefiting by a University training; but in framing the courses it is felt that account must be taken of the tremendous difference—in language, in inherited beliefs, instincts and prejudices, in environment and early upbringing, in position in after-life—between the average Native and European student; so that instead of saying to the students, "This is the kind of education that suits Europeans, take this," we should rather say, "This is the best possible education for you that can be given."

The application of such a principle would bring about a great change in the system of Native education existing in the greater part of the country. At present it is possible for students to go as far as the entrance examination of the Cape

of Good Hope University, and at the end of their studies to be incapable of reading intelligently or intelligibly in their own Bantu language. And very little religion, morality, or useful knowledge can be really assimilated by Native boys and girls when the medium of instruction in all branches of school work is English, a language which the great majority only hear in school and in which none of them ever thinks. It should be one of the objects of the College to develop and mould the Native languages so that thereby the Native people may build up a permanent civilisation of their own instead of imitating what is superficial in ours.

The courses also should be framed with a view to breaking down the power of Native superstition, which is *the* curse of Native life. Superstitious beliefs are retarding material and moral progress and the spread of the truly religious spirit; they are responsible for the habitual attitude of suspicion and distrust which is that of the average Native towards his own neighbours. They have occasioned practically every Native war and rebellion which has taken place in the past. And the unfortunate fact is that Christian teaching and our present educational systems have so far failed to dislodge this terrible enemy to progress and happiness. Some believe that the most effective way to deal with it is to give Native children such courses in Nature-study and practical science as will induce the habit of careful and accurate observation, and also to give simple health lessons to convince those who now attribute most common diseases to witchcraft what are the real causes of sickness. But this method can only be followed when a class of really well-educated Native teachers has been produced, who will have received special training from medical men, and who will not only know that the belief in witchcraft is false, but will also be able to impress this knowledge upon others of their own race.

If time and space allowed, one might point out further results that would follow the application of the principle for which the promoters of the College stand, that all the educational courses established should have in view the special needs of the Natives, and that we cannot yet take for granted that an educational system drawn up for Europeans is neces-

sarily the most suitable for Natives. This would probably mean that most of the courses should, for the present at any rate, be framed with a definite, practical, utilitarian end in view; that special provision should be made for the training of the many sons of influential chiefs attending the College, upon whose shoulders later on will rest grave responsibilities. But enough has perhaps been said to show what the promoters of the College are aiming at. They desire to produce Native men of character, trained to do useful work in the country; men who by daily sympathetic contact with cultured gentlemen—the best type of our University graduates—may assimilate right views of life and its duties, and may pass on to their own people all that is best in our civilisation.

Whether the College will fulfil the aspirations of the Natives and the hopes of its promoters depends upon many things. But no factor will contribute more largely to its success or failure than the attitude towards it of the men that count in South African life. If it has the confidence and active sympathy of the more thoughtful section of South Africans it may do as much towards solving the great Native question in South Africa as Tuskegee and similar institutions have done in the case of the Negro problem in America.

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