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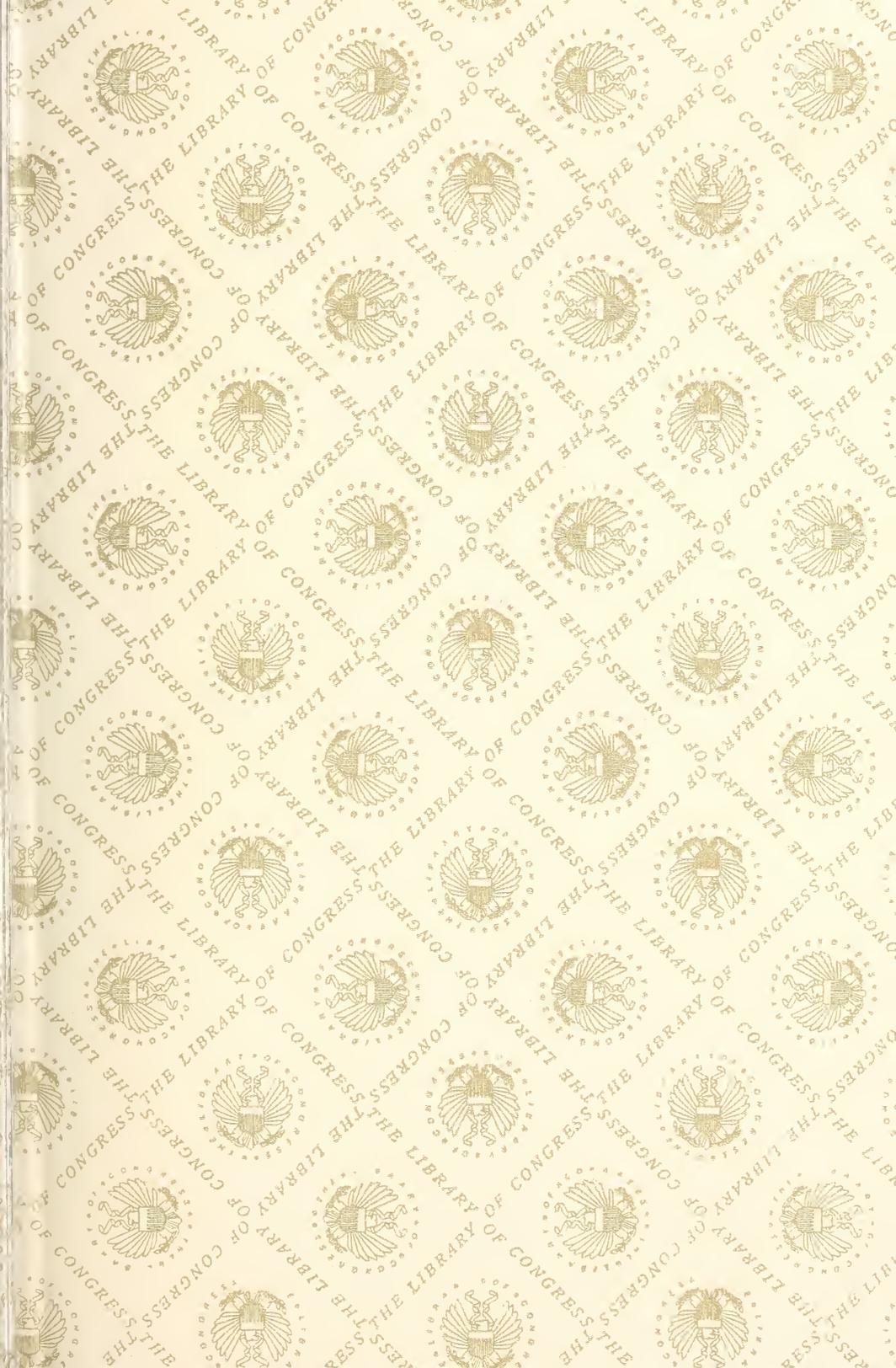
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THE RACE PROBLEM.

THE BROWNSVILLE RAID.

Shall the white man share his inheritance with colored races?

Lynching for rape justified.

South Carolina under reconstruction.

Her second declaration of independence.

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SPEECH

OF

HON. BENJAMIN R. TILLMAN,
OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

Saturday, January 12, 1907.



WASHINGTON.

1907.

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The bequest of
Daniel Murray,
Washington, D. C.
1925.

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SPEECH
OF
HON. BENJAMIN R. TILLMAN.

The Senate having under consideration the following resolution—

Resolved, That the Committee on Military Affairs be, and hereby is, authorized to take such further testimony as may be necessary to establish the facts connected with the discharge of members of Companies B, C, and D, Twenty-fifth United States Infantry, and that it be, and hereby is, authorized to send for persons and papers and administer oaths, and report thereon, by bill or otherwise.

The committee, or any subcommittee thereof, is further authorized, if deemed necessary, to visit Brownsville, Tex., inspect the locality of the recent disturbance, and examine witnesses there—

Mr. TILLMAN said:

Mr. PRESIDENT: Now I come to the question of mob violence in Texas. The War Department in its dispatches showed great interest and earnestness and dread lest if the men under accusation were surrendered they could not be defended, and, as I say, they were sneaked out of Brownsville because of the dread that if it were known that they were being carried away somebody somewhere might meet the train and have a lynching. I want to ask anybody here whether, if these had been white soldiers, there would have been a word said about mob violence? Everybody knows there would not have been. The men under suspicion would have been surrendered to the civil authorities, as the law requires. The War Department might have sent the Judge-Advocate-General to defend them, as it had a right to do. The matter would have been tested in the courts, the guilt or the innocence of the men under accusation would have been established, and the thing would have been settled in a proper way.

But, Mr. President, while it has been said by the President himself that this action of his was not influenced by race at all, that the race question is not involved, that there is no relationship between the color of the men and the official action taken by the War Department and the Executive, it appears to me to be idle to deny it. Senators have deprecated the entry into this discussion of the race question in general. The Senator from Ohio [Mr. FORAKER] says he does not want to discuss that question. The Senator from Virginia [Mr. DANIEL] is equally earnest in the desire that it shall not be injected here or elsewhere. But what is the use for us to ignore a plain and palpable fact? If the race question looms up here as prominently as the Washington Monument looms across the western horizon, what is the use for us to shun and to dread its discussion? While I was not in the Chamber, accidentally being out, it warmed the cockles of my heart to read in the RECORD the story

of how this Chamber, by unanimous vote, put its opinion in the law that the great war of 1861-1865 was not a war of rebellion, but a war between the States—a civil war.

I claim the right to say that I know as much about northern public opinion at this time on the race question as any man in this Chamber. In the last four months I have addressed not less than 100,000 people in picked audiences throughout the North, mainly on this question. I find there, wherever I have gone, the same sentiment of lack of sectionalism and of animosity to each other that was shown here yesterday. The people of the North no longer hate the South, and the people of the South have forgiven the North for the wrongs and injuries. [Laughter.] Oh, well, Senators laugh. I will illustrate it. I was speaking about the terrible sacrifice that the race problem had cost this country—500,000 lives, billions of treasure—no one knows how many—six or eight; the tears and blood that we offered up on the altar of patriotism in 1861-1865 to settle the race question. Some man spoke up and said, "There was not any bloodshed north of Mason and Dixon's line." I said: "No; and if the people north of Mason and Dixon's line had stayed at home, there would not have been any bloodshed at all." I am not going into the merits of that proposition. I am not going to harass the souls of people here by saying that the people of the North had no right to go South. I ask you to agree that the southern soldiers fought for what they believed to be right, and showed it by dying for it. That is all I ask.

But that sacrifice to settle the race question, so far from having been effective, is acknowledged to have been absolutely wasted and worthless. We settled slavery and we settled the question of nationality. We destroyed one, and we settled forever the proposition as to whether we were a confederation or a nation. We are a nation with a big N. But the southern half of this country has no conception of the word "nation" except that it is connected with the word "nigger." More's the pity!

When I want to be entirely respectful and conservative, I sometimes write a few words to read, and in all seriousness, with all the solemnity of which I am capable, I wish to address myself very briefly to the race problem in general.

I do not understand the tactics of those who do not wish the race question discussed and I have no patience with such shortsighted and cowardly action. There is really nothing else involved except the race question, and the difficulties and dangers which environ it should make us the more anxious to begin to consider it calmly and dispassionately before other and more dire calamities come to us from it. Broadly stated, the white people of the United States are face to face with the vital issue as to whether the Caucasian race shall share its inheritance with the other races of the earth. In Cuba the question presses for solution and immediate action. Shall that island be governed by negroes or white men? Shall it be doomed to the fate of Santo Domingo or shall it be saved for the white man? The question of a protectorate or annexation and of the future status of the people there must be determined in the near future.

Now, I can elaborate this a little by pointing you to the fact

that but for the existence in Cuba of the large negro population—which demands absolute equality in government, with the right to elect a majority of that Government, if it is able to do so, and have that Government run by negroes—there would have been no insurrection. I do not hesitate to declare my belief that that insurrection was manufactured in New York and the arms furnished and the money to finance it, the negroes encouraged to rebel or to rise against Palma's Government and produce a condition which made him plead to the United States, "Come and save us." So the Secretary of War was sent there, our ships were hurried to Habana, the Secretary giving place to Mr. Magoon, who is now there in control.

I saw in the newspapers in the last week, in the Star and the New York Herald, statements which indicate that the sugar planters intend to blow up the railroads of the English company before they will allow the negroes to govern there, in order to compel the United States Government to assume a protectorate or annex the island, one or the other. When you search for the motive you are compelled to agree that the whole scheme is one to bring the sugar plantations owned by New York and English capitalists within the tariff wall of the United States Government, so that they can sell their sugar in our markets without paying the tariff duty. That is only one phase and a very small phase of the race question.

On the Pacific coast the relationship between the Mongolians and the Caucasians is involved. The President announces himself as favoring the policy of absolute obliteration of the race line, the granting of full citizenship to the Japanese. The Americans of the Pacific coast, as I understand it, are bitterly opposed to this policy, and without regard to party lines. These Americans ought to know what is for their best interest, and they ought to and undoubtedly will have the sympathy and aid of their fellow-citizens North and South in protecting their interests. But these two phases of the race problem sink into insignificance alongside of the greater and more vital question of the relationship of the races in the Southern States of this Union.

Now, here is a startling fact, and on facts like this I plant my feet and ask any and everybody to argue from the fact.

In six Southern States—South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana—in the aggregate the negroes outnumber the whites and in two of them—South Carolina and Mississippi—the negro preponderance is very heavy. Here are the figures from the census of 1900:

State.	White.	Negro.
South Carolina.....	557,995	782,821
Georgia.....	1,181,518	1,084,813
Alabama.....	1,601,390	827,307
Florida.....	297,812	290,730
Mississippi.....	643,640	907,670
Louisiana.....	730,821	650,841
Total.....	4,413,176	4,423,605

In two of those States—South Carolina and Mississippi—that compact group, with an area larger than France and capable of

supporting a population as large as that of France, the negroes outnumber the whites. In our State there are 225,000 more negroes than whites, and in Mississippi two hundred and sixty-odd thousand more negroes than whites.

Under the law—the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments—these people possess every right that white men have, as far as the Federal Constitution confers rights, and the fifteenth amendment expressly forbids the enactment of any law which shall discriminate in voting on account of race or color. Large numbers of these negroes are disfranchised at this time, but these laws are only temporary and work no cure; they are only palliatives and offer us only a breathing spell, and in the near future enough negroes will be able to vote, under laws which we ourselves have passed, and we have exhausted all expedients, to outvote us. Can anybody undertake to say that there will not then come a struggle for mastery between the two races.

In Cuba the color line has been obliterated and miscegenation is in full blast. At the North the same conditions exist, and the large number of mulattoes and quadroons with white blood in their veins who have migrated there are the leaders of the doctrine of absolute social equality, encouraged as they have been and are now by the President of the United States. Take this from his message on the Brownsville affair:

It is of the utmost importance to all of our people that we shall deal with each man on his merit as a man, and not deal with him merely as a member of a given race; that we shall judge each man by his conduct and not his color.

And again:

Every farsighted friend of the colored race in its efforts to strive onward and upward, should teach first, as the most important lesson, alike to the white man and the black, the duty of treating the individual man strictly on his worth as he shows it.

Consider the full import and meaning of these words and then consider whether or not they are sincere and honest or whether in the fervor of a fight to justify an unwarranted usurpation of power and exercise of executive authority the President forgot himself and said more than he intended or means. To illustrate, is it possible or desirable that all consideration of race and color shall be dismissed from our minds and not govern our action; that radical instincts implanted in us by nature are to be ignored and all men of all races to be judged and treated on the basis of "individual merit?" Are men to be made over and the caste feeling and race antagonisms of centuries to disappear in the universal brotherhood of man? Are there any Senators in this Chamber who subscribe to this doctrine who would have the Caucasian, highest and noblest of the five races as is attested by history, descend to the level of the others and share his birthright with them with the inevitable result that pure white blood will disappear from the face of the earth, and after the mixing of centuries shall have completed the amalgamation, have all men of one skin and one type? Is President Roosevelt ready to act up to his own theory and have his children marry men and women of the other races? Would he accept as a daughter-in-law a Chinese, a Malay, an Indian, or a negro in accord with the doctrine laid down in his message which I have quoted? We all know he would not, and while "fine words butter no parsnips" words like these are a source of incalculable evil.

I have pointed out to you that his utterances in the official order No. 26 and in his letter to Admiral Rogers had induced the negroes to believe that they had a right to demand and to assert the right of absolute equality.

The southern white men and women who have for forty years resisted in every possible way this doctrine of the equality of the races are just as resolved now as they have always been not to submit to it or its results. They are resolved to maintain control of their State governments and to prevent in every way possible social and political equality, with the inevitable destruction of their civilization which would follow if they yielded. The conditions are growing more and more aggravated every day. Race antagonism increases in intensity. Are things to drift until direful tragedies multiply on every hand and blood shall flow like water? Is the statesmanship of our time inadequate to cope with this question, just as the statesmanship of 1860 failed to prevent the dire catastrophe of civil war? That war was fought to settle the race question, but forty years after its termination we find conditions more threatening in some of their aspects than they were in 1861.

It is not possible for me to believe that the theorists and sentimentalists at the North, who are responsible for the conditions existing, will be allowed to pursue their policy of absolute recognition of race equality much further. They settled the war entirely contrary to common sense, I may say—I mean the result of the war. They went to war to destroy slavery and to restore the Union. If they had stopped there, we would have none of this trouble on our hands now. This question would have been allowed to evolve naturally, and we would have been permitted to give to those negroes who may have shown themselves qualified and proper to hold the ballot the right to vote. But we have made this mistake of enfranchising a race, slaves last week, barbarians three generations ago. If it was a mistake, why not say so? And why not retrace our steps?

I do not believe that the northern people want to settle this question in any other way than will be best for the interests of the white people of the Pacific coast and of the Southern States, if they only knew how to go about it. I give the people of the North credit for being just as good and noble-hearted and generous in their wishes to do justice as I claim for ourselves. It is not a local question, nor is it a sectional question, except in so far as there are more negroes in the South than there are in the North. We are face to face with the negro. You have got a few thousand. My county has got more than all New England.

I plead with Senators here not to ignore the gravity of the situation, not to allow things to go on as they are going on now, involving a struggle for mastery between the races in the South, coupled with the direful tragedies that will come, because the white people are resolved to maintain their civilization and protect their women. It is a serious obligation of duty, and if I do nothing else in this debate than to have the subject presented broadly from the standpoint of patriotism and of statesmanship by somebody else, I will welcome the opportunity to give some more facts when the time comes. This Brownsville incident would never have attracted a thousandth part of the interest it has but for the fact that this great underlying question is involved in it.

Mr. BEVERIDGE. Mr. President—

The VICE-PRESIDENT. Does the Senator from South Carolina yield to the Senator from Indiana?

Mr. TILLMAN. I was about through, but I will yield to the Senator for a question.

Mr. BEVERIDGE. I was merely going to ask a question which is pertinent, I think. The Senator has spoken with a great deal of vigor on the race question. Could the Senator suggest to the Senate what the solution of the race question is? What is he going to do about it?

Mr. TILLMAN. Well, that would involve another couple of hours, and I have already trespassed long enough on the attention of the Senate to-day. I hope the Senator from Indiana, who is himself a brilliant statesman, will be able to give us some suggestion as to what we ought to do about it. I merely point out a great and a tragic situation.

Mr. BEVERIDGE. Mr. President—

The VICE-PRESIDENT. Does the Senator from South Carolina yield further to the Senator from Indiana?

Mr. TILLMAN. With pleasure.

Mr. BEVERIDGE. The Senator has taken two hours in stating the existence of a condition to which he says he has given very great study, and I know that is true, and he has referred to the question of statesmanship. I am satisfied that I voice the opinion of my colleagues here when I say that the Senate would be delighted to give him two hours more if he will now state the remedy which in all his study has suggested itself to him.

Mr. TILLMAN. I will do that later in the debate, perhaps. Just at this time, fatigued as I am and having just gotten up out of a sick bed, I shall not undertake to go into any further discussion of this question. I merely have tried, in my feeble and humble way, to point out that we in the South are on the crest of a volcano. We are environed with dangers of which the people of the North have no conception, and we realize the fearful tragedies that are near in front of us unless something can be done to ameliorate conditions. That is all. We are not responsible for the situation. We can not change the condition. The discussion, or rather the action, must come from those who precipitated this condition, who are responsible for it now, and who will be responsible for its continuous existence. I am ready to contribute in my humble way, both with facts and arguments, when the time comes.

It is high time something was being done to have this great and vital question brought before the country in some practical and sensible way. The deep interest shown in the Brownsville tragedy is ample evidence that the people of the country are beginning to feel a deep concern in the various phases of this question, and it is absolutely useless for doctrinaires and politicians to undertake to pooh pooh the question and dismiss it with a wave of the hand, and for one I am ready to go to battle under the slogan, "America for the Americans, and this is a white man's country and white men must govern it."





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