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MOTHER KATHERINE DREXEL AND THE COLOR LINE.

The colored people of the United States are largely in debt to Mother Katherine Drexel for many and most bounteous acts of charity and benevolence. This much we acknowledge as a matter of fact. Her self-sacrifice, her holy intentions, her practical generosity, command at once for her name, most reverential respect and most profound gratitude, on the part of the beneficiaries. But where the great friend of the friendless makes a grievous mistake, it is in the way she has selected to bestow her liberalities.

The Mother belongs to the Catholic religion, and under the direction and control of its ministers, she has placed vast sums of money avowedly to christianize and educate the Negroes.

As a consequence of the misplaced bounty, the color line is perpetuated where it exists already, and introduced with the germ of success where it has not existed before.

It is the case right in New Orleans. The Catholic Church is about to open a separate church for the colored Catholics, and the eminent head of the diocese does not hesitate to connect this devout Christian's name with such an unwelcome innovation.

The project has no doubt a strange fascination for the his Grace the Archbishop, but we dare say that had he been left alone to carry out his ideal, action might have been postponed to a very long time, long enough probably to be abandoned. But with the funds furnished by this pious lady, the head of the Church in Louisiana was enabled to hasten his work according to his ambition, and in a form likely to be permanent. Ever since the advent of the Archbishop in our midst, his eminence has shown quite a determination of dividing the Catholics, and if the good Mother will listen to him in all things, and give him the means, he will, we have every reason to believe, finally push the color line to the point of exclusion as well as inclusion. For separation in one form may bring separation in another; all will depend upon the circumstances of development. If the colored people will take kindly to the new church; if they will patronize it, the minister who has succeeded in gaining approval for his work, is likely to improve it on the lines nearest to his heart. This view of the matter ought to be plain to every true and sensible Christian of this city and elsewhere. Now what we want to impress upon the mind of our kind friend, Miss Drexel, is the fact, that such distinctions are unnecessary and even harmful and that we must deplore and discourage them.

This is the reason why we enter our protest against such benevolence. The colored people are poor, it is true. But there are many other poor people in this world. The colored people were created by the same God who created other nations of men, and, like others, they were born to live in society with their neighbors so as to contribute their share of responsibility on this planet.

Mother Katherine has taken the vows of the Church, and yet she seems by her actions unconsciously to drift into channels which lead into errors and contradictions. While Christ has established the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man, the great Mother's benevolence is being used by destination to destroy that fundamental principle of our religion. If men are divided by, or in, the Church, where can they be united in the bonds of faith and love of truth and justice?

This good Mother may not understand the science of government enough, or probably the discussion of that part of human thought may be disagreeable to her mind, still we will venture to assert, in a general way, that the Republic is that form of association which, according to Athenians, who were the first to make the experiment, offered the boon of "common enjoyment". One of their greatest orators said of the Athenians: they were men "who forced the inhabitants of other cities to live as equals, not being willing to suffer that among the Greeks, the people should be subjected to the will of the small number, and who strove, not to weaken, but to strengthen all those who were attached to their fortunes." And still more beautifully did the same orator say: "they were the first to abolish at their home the sovereign power, and to substitute the democratic government, and who, fully convinced that liberty and union were the source of happiness, rendered common to all citizens all the hopes which they founded upon their prowess." "They thought," he said again, "that it was due only to ferocious animals to use force, but that it was reserved to man to fix the right by law and to make him enjoy it by reason, obeying to both, commanded by the one, and enlightened by the other."

These quotations enable us to call the attention of that noble-hearted Mother to the fact that there are two

forces at war with each other in this country. One would give us the Athenian idea of a Republic where men should "live as equals" deriving their happiness from "liberty and union", where the use of force is considered the natural privilege of ferocious animals, where it is reserved to man, in recognition of his own peculiar attribute of excellence, to "fix the right by law", in order that he might enjoy it by reason, and that obeying to both, he might find pleasure and honor and profit by being "commanded by the one, and enlightened by the other".

The other would give us a Republic founded on the fancies of Aristotle and other so-called philosophers who attempted to prove inequality among men by order of nature.

This last definition is the pride of America. But it is not the true spirit of true Democracy. Upon the principle that people cannot be brigands and Christians at the same time, like the ancient fanatics who would put a man in slavery in order

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to convert him, no Christian can have the benefit of her charities when they are distributed in such a way as to propitiate prejudices, to maintain distinctions and to exclude the possibility of union, liberty and reason.

Montesquieu said: "It is then a true maxim that in a Republic, in order to render estimable equality and frugality, it is necessary they should be established by law". And as the Republic depends upon the dispositions and customs of Republicans, as the wise will make a wise Republic, as the happily-inclined will make a happy Republic, the just, the humane, the Christianity, will make a Republic exactly in conformity with their respective instincts and convictions.

Things must go by causes and effects.

And as on physical science, action is followed by reaction; education carries with it a chain of consequences destined to be the more serious, because imbedded in all the operations of the youthful mind from which they are inseparable.

The impressions received at the tender age of life, mature inevitably into ineradicable opinions, and thus, often, men are made to think and act more like trained animals than like human beings.

Therefore too much care cannot be thrown around the methods adopted to prepare the young.

In fact the schoolhouse is expected to form the citizen, the gentleman, the Christian, in unison with the inspirations and aspirations of guardians, parents and countrymen.

By all means, let us avoid a false education which misleads the mind and corrupts the heart.

It was a part of the education in some republics that members of the nobility should not be allowed to contract marriage with those of the common herd. This idea passed into law, and it took philosophy any number of centuries to combat this atrocious system, which under another form exists in many parts of the United States. In view of these considerations we beg leave to invite Mother Katherine to examine well, not only the exceptional position she occupies in the Church, but also to examine well what might be the effects of that system of separate education, by which thousands of prospective citizens are being reared in sentiments antagonistic to Republican institutions, and to that holy religion which cannot tolerate any division of the human family on race, color, nationality, section, or on any other mode for that matter.

Experience is there to prove that affiliation has advanced the cause of equality in this country. We can only rejoice, that, while it was introduced only for one portion of mankind, it holds out the hope, that, if extended to all, it will eventually bring about that common brotherhood, which wealth, pride, wickedness and ambition, have done so much to render impossible in this land, withal so well suited to freedom and to brotherly love.

Permit us an illustration which is not inconsistent with our subject. Up to a short time before the war, the crews of our steamboats in Louisiana were often made up of foreigners. When a Negro slave was found among them, he was treated with a higher consideration than his other companions. This feeling of contempt was so strong between the higher and lower classes of white men, that its intensity caused a momentary obliviousness of the slave's condition and there seemed to be irreconcilable hatred.

But since then, under the spur of interest, identity of color taken as identity of race, obliterated the lines of nationality, and the influence of contact among all species of a white hue soon created a transformation, which, in less than fifty years, has left nothing to be desired in the shape of equality for those concerned in that peculiar evolution.

Now, if that divinely inspired Mother will listen to reason and to the discriminating policy of the respective institutions of the school,

will be complete in this world and in the other. She will make useful men and women, Christian beings imbued with the broad ideal of brotherhood and patriotism, two elements necessary to be found in the make-up of the citizens of a Republic, and of the larger sphere of religious dominion.

We do not need great Negroes, we need good and true men, virtuous citizens and genuine Christians.

If the Catholic Church in Louisiana cannot, at this stage of progress—imitate the example of other institutions, it is the duty of Christians, such as Mother Katherine, to remedy the evil. The schools of the church should be open to all, like Harvard, Yale, West Point and other American institutions, and not confined to the few on account of race prejudice, like Tulane and others, whose work degrades mankind, by teaching a peculiar code of coarseness and contemptuousness. Such institutions are pernicious for the whites as well as for the blacks. "Turn as you will," said Charles Sumner, "you have to come back to the principle of equality."

The coeducation of blacks and whites is not an experiment, nor is it a failure where it is practiced, consequently the blessed heart who has given us the unselfish sentiment of her devotion, has no cause to use a system so derogatory of her work and of her vows.

Let her give for God and not for men; let her give for religion, and not for prejudice; let her give for brotherly love and not for caste feeling; let her give for "liberty and union," and not for distinctiveness and separation; let her give for reason, justice, equality and fraternity, and, having thus prepared the way to happiness by homogeneity, let her name, already higher in the Temple of Deeds, than that of any other woman in America, take a new flight upward, until it becomes in time the envy of angels!

R. L. DESDUNES.

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