

Africo-American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii. 32.

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A LETTER TO PRESIDENT HOOVER

By William Pickens

Editor's Note: The open letter which follows was written to President Hoover by Mr. William Pickens in April. The reply to this letter, made through the War Department, will be released by The Associated Negro Press next week.

Dear President Hoover:

You are the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army. But there is often information which would never reach you through official channels. This would be more especially true about Negro soldiers and their situation. Army regulations forbid subordinates to "go over the heads" of their superiors with any information. That is very good for army discipline, perhaps, but is very limiting to the information which the Superior of all superiors is likely to get.

I recently visited Douglas, Arizona, where are stationed about three hundred members of the 25th Infantry, Negro troops of the regular army. They have been there for many years, on the barren plains, behind the bare hills,—out of touch with civilization as we know it. It was once the custom of the War Department to change the locations of Negro regiments about as often as the locations of the white regiments are changed,—and not to leave them to the tedium of one place, especially a dreary place of few colored families for long periods of years. The need for change is demonstrated by the fact that now, although the troops are left, the white officers are changed, and allowed to go to other regiments, new white officers taking their places. Thus the sanity of the officers is preserved, but the troops are left to weariness. Formerly it was the custom for officers to have to stay with their regiments, as a rule; and that was better for the Negro troops, for then the white officers used their influence to get the whole regiment moved to new posts, so that the officers could also get a change. But the new practice of changing officers and sending new officers to the Negro troops for a period, deprives the colored soldiers of even this indirect influence for getting a needed "change."

I also visited Fort Huachuca, in Arizona, where are stationed six or seven hundred soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry and two or three hundred men of one of the infantry regiments,—all colored soldiers with their white officers and attaches. There are, of course, Negro non-commissioned officers and one Negro commissioned officer who is the Chaplain. While this high and well-appointed army post, high in the mountains, is a much more delightful place than dreary Camp Jones at Douglas, there is the same mistreatment that the colored soldiers must remain here for long periods of years, while white officers come and go, because of the human need of change.

And for some strange reason, just as in our policy toward Haiti, we are continually sending to these Negroes in the army a great majority of white officers from the very section of the country which has demonstrated by three hundred years of history that it knows least about how to treat colored people as human beings. Why we continue to infer that the very States which exhibit the greatest failures in the matter of interracial adjustments, can yet produce the men best fitted to handle and live with Negro people, is something that passes all logical understanding. This does not dispute the exceptions: that there is an occasional man from those States highly competent, in spite of his early en-

vironment, to live humanly with colored folk; while some men from some of the other States often show the saddest unfitness for any kind of contacts with colored people. But in our official pre-arrangements for handling Negroes in the army (as in Haiti), we seem to think that this is the rule rather than the exception.

At Fort Huachuca, unless a Negro soldier is an officer above a certain rank, he is required to agree that his wife shall be the servant of the wives of white officers, before he is granted the privilege of bringing his family to live on the reservation. If this is a regulation for white soldiers anywhere in the army nobody seems to have heard of it; but even if so, it is an injustice and a violation of soldierly and citizenship dignity. It is always possible that a private in the army may be married to a woman who not only does not wish to be a servant, but who does not in any sense need or deserve to be a servant for anybody,—who even may be financially and socially the equals if not the superiors of the wives of the officers,—outside of the army reservation grounds. We know soldiers whose wives are business women, in their own right, and who, therefore, cannot come to live with their husbands within the government reservation because they are not of the servant class and will not sign themselves up as servants.

These and other such things are such as would never reach the ears of the President of the United States, even if he visited the army posts in question, if the President came everything would be on "fitness parade," exhibiting its best externality, and no common soldier would dare approach the President or dare to complain to him if he were stationed near him.

At Fort Huachuca, where there are nearly 1,000 Negro soldiers and many with their families, there is not a single Negro dentist or physician or Negro nurse. All the medical staff, from the Medical Major down, are white doctors and nurses,—as if anybody anywhere in the world could be made to believe that white Americans are more capable of giving sympathetic, as well as scientific treatment and attention to the Negro's body and health. The man at the head of the medical force at Fort Huachuca is especially unsympathetic and even impolite to the Negro officers and their families, some of whom I observed to approach him. Some of them send members of their families many miles across the dry Arizona plains to private physicians in the far-away cities rather than to encounter the coldness and the incivility of this officer. No human being can have the confidence that he will get proper medical attention from another human being when that other human being shows a lack of respect for the personality or even the humanity of the patient. There ought to be some Negro doctors on the staffs that look after Negro health. That would be healthier for army discipline,—and much healthier for the Negro soldiers and their families.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Army doubtless knows that we have four Negro regiments in the regular army, and only four Negro commissioned officers. And three of these Negro officers are chaplains,—in other words, only technically army officers, but really religious officers. In our hour of need, during the World War, we had many actual Negro army officers, commissioned and in service. It was necessary for the morale of Negro troops. Our peace time army procedure

should be a preparation in morale. The morale of civilized people is not made in a day, but in the process of education. If the co-operation of Negro officers helps to support morale in the hour of war, it would help to build up morale in the days of peace.

The Philippines are not Americans, and yet among our Philippine troops we have many more real and commissioned officers of that race. The American Negro will always be an American; our island peoples will not always even be subject to America. Philippines are welcomed at West Point and promoted in the army. I suppose I am not giving any information to the Commander-in-Chief, when I say that the 4 Negro regiments of the regular army did more than any other four regiments of the entire army to conquer and "pacify" the Philippine Islands.

As an American citizen (which, constitutionally speaking at least, is something even more permanent and important than being an American soldier) I am calling the attention of our highest army officer, who is also our highest civil officer, to the situation of our Negro troops,—who can hardly say for themselves what I may say for them.

Respectfully submitted,
Very truly yours,
WILLIAM PICKENS.

CATAWBA SCHOOL OF METHODS NOTES

By Rev. F. C. Shirley

Our plans are all set and our faces are turned toward beautiful Albion Academy in Franklinton, N. C., where, during the week of August 25-31, we will assemble for our annual Synodical Convention and School of Methods.

The Executive Staff, under the leadership of the acting President, Dr. H. C. Miller, of Greensboro, is hopeful of making this the best year in the history of the organization.

Our genial, generous host, Dr. J. A. Savage, began preparation for our coming some weeks ago. Early in May when I was there he showed me a fine field of corn and beans, and a large patch of potatoes and tomatoes, several fine shoats, over two hundred young chickens, with other accessories. He said in his characteristic manner, "Boy, we are getting ready for you in August." Those who were there last year know what these words mean.

In face of the fact that old "Dr. Hard Times" seems to have us all in his grip, I do not think there has been any year when the pre-convention interest has been keener. Inquiries have come in from several sources already. One minister writes: "I am planning to come and bring my wife and several children. Can I get accommodations?" Of course, we said, yes. From St. James, Greensboro, comes a letter stating: "We have a young people's choir of 24 members. Mrs. Sarah Barber, the leader, wants the entire group to attend the School of Methods. What about it?" Well, we can't say no to that fine bunch of youngsters. The letter further states that this 24 is aside from the regular delegation. I may add that St. James has been having from 18 to 20 delegates.

Then here and there on the field I hear of this Woman's Missionary Society planning to send a delegate; that Young People's Society raising money to send their own delegate, and Sunday school after Sunday school getting ready. So we are much encouraged at the present outlook.

The registration book is already open and we will follow our time-honored custom of making room assignments in

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FIRST NEGRO STATE CONVENTION IN THE UNITED STATES

By Col. Fred. A. Olds, in The Charlotte Sunday Observer.

(Concluded from last week)
Need of Education

"We desire education for our children that they may be made more useful in all the relations of life. We most earnestly desire to have the disability under which we formerly labored removed and to have all the oppressive laws which make unjust discrimination on account of race or color wiped from the statutes of the State. We invoke your protection for the sanctity of our family relations. We most respectfully and earnestly pray that some provision may be made for the care of the great number of orphan children and the helpless and infirm who, by the new order of affairs, will be thrown upon the world without protection; also that you will favor, by some timely and wise measures, the reunion of families which have long been broken up by the war or by the operations of slavery.

Though associated with many memories of suffering as well as enjoyment, we have always loved our homes, and dreaded as the worst of evils separation from them. Now that freedom and a new career are before us we love this land and people more than ever before. Here we have toiled and suffered, our parents, wives and children are buried here and in this land we will remain until forcibly driven away.

Praying for such encouragement of our industry as the proper regulation of the hours of labor and the providing of the means of protection against rapacious and cruel employers, and for the collection of just claims, we commit our cause into your hands, invoking Heaven's choicest blessings upon your deliberations and upon the State!

The document was signed by James H. Harris, chairman, John P. Goode, George A. Rue, Isham Sweet and John Randolph, Jr., Committee.

Greeley's Address
An address of Horace Greeley, editor of The New York Tribune, "To the Colored People of North Carolina," was read. He had been asked to be present and speak, but had another engagement and sent a letter. He urged the Negroes to be hopeful, saying that for 30 years he had ardently wished for a free country, and now saw it. He said:

"Be hopeful. Great reforms are seldom completed in a moment. But for Northern subservience, so enormous that they were justified in expecting to be aided by it in the field as well as in the cabinet, the slaveholders would never have revolted. But for the imbecility in high places and incapacity, if not treason also, in the direction of our armies, the rebellion would have been speedily suppressed without seriously affecting your condition—possibly with new concessions and guarantees to slavery.

"Be patient. You may not win full recognition of your rights directly, but the effort will never be abandoned until its success is assured. And we are no longer resisted by a vast tenacious, pecuniary interest; an all but omnipotent 'vested right.' Slavery, the tree whereof of Negro hate and white prejudice of color are branches, has been cut down. There is still vitality in the roots, but the branches are bound to wither and decay. Yet this is not the work of a day and we must learn to labor, and, if need be, to wait.

Peaceful and Diligent

"Be peaceful. Do not be seduced or provoked to resist law-

ful authority with lawless violence. Better suffer wrong in silence than be worsted in invoking the protection of the laws. You see what the slaveholders have incurred by resisting authority and force. Let nothing swerve or tempt you from the ways of peace. If you are oppressed and abused, appeal to Congress, which will soon have been clothed by the impending constitutional amendment (to abolish slavery) with power to redress your more flagrant wrongs. Whoever among you resists laws gives a signal advantage to your enemies. Better suffer and trust.

"Be diligent. I am exhorting you to steadfast industry. You have had enough of that. Not being fools, you know you have to work hard for all you get, and probably for something more. There can not be a hundred of you who do not know that you are to work out your own pecuniary situation or miserably perish. But you must be equally diligent in educating yourselves and your children, and must not grudge working an extra hour a day, if needed, to provide yourselves with teachers and books. It is indispensable that all of you, or nearly all, acquire the rudiments of a substantial education, at the earliest moment, and that you should keep on acquiring useful knowledge by every opportunity, to the last day of your lives. Your alleged ignorance is now one of the chief pretenses for denying you the right of suffrage.

Seek Self-Respect

"Respect yourselves. Refuse to minister to the vicious appetites of others no matter what is the temptation. Stand quietly and respectfully aloof from all whites who see fit to regard you as inferior merely because of your color. Keep away, or get away, from all cities, unless you are sure of making money rapidly and virtuously therein. Hold no voluntary relations to Negro haters and bestow no patronage on them, though this compels you to go without comforts you might otherwise enjoy. Trade with and patronize your own friends. Do not fail to encourage your brethren who embark in trade or other fruitful industry; keep out of debt; work if possible for men you esteem and trust; and all of you become land-owners as soon as you can without running into debt. Few know how much land there is in an acre, and North Carolinians understand this less than most others. If you each had a cabin and four acres of land you would need never more after next harvest to look for work; while those who want help (workers) would come looking for you, offering you fair wages, living wages.

"Finally, stay where you belong. It may be and by be well to emigrate, but not now. North Carolina is a noble State, with her resources mainly undeveloped. Her climate is admirable, her soil better than is supposed; her inland navigation, water powers, timber, minerals, etc., sources of unsuspected wealth. Work for the best wages offered by good men until you can save the means of employing yourselves; strive to win the respect and esteem of the better whites and keep clear of the worst ones, and be sure that, when you shall, by your thrift, have made yourselves independent and desirable customers of merchants and others, your righteous demands for enfranchisement can, if not already

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THE ATLANTIC SYNODICAL AND SCHOOL OF METHODS

Augusta, Ga., August 18-24, 1930

Back to Haines Institute, Augusta, Ga., August 18th, comrades in the ministry, laymen, matrons and maidens, boys and girls, for a rendezvous of old friends and the meeting of new ones. If you want inspiration, you will find it there. If you crave for more knowledge and power that you may be of larger usefulness and service in Christian work, they will be at your command. If you wish for recreation, it awaits you. A carefully selected faculty will instruct you in various lines of church work. Able speakers will deliver inspirational addresses. "Big" Miller, Long, Clark, Wood, Mitchell, Shirley, Francis, Ulmer and Scott, and cheerleaders of note from the fairer sex will be there to give you thrills in clashes between the Reds and Blues.

Prbf. Lewis will see that the dye is cast for renewal of battle between the Reds and the Blues.

Haines Institute, Augusta, Ga., is the ideal and central spot for our Convention of one week's duration. There will be a reasonable price for board and lodging, where we will work while we work, play while we play, eat while we eat, and sleep while we sleep. Come, friends; let us go back; bring others and we will do each other good.

The Scout Camp, which has been one of the most interesting features of the Convention work for the last two sessions, under the supervision of Rev. W. C. Jones, will be intact. Aside from the Boy Scouts, provision will be made for the children who may come. Some good lady will have charge of this group and keep the little ones busily engaged in some line of work that will be profitable and noteworthy.

Dr. W. L. Metz (Uncle Billy), our honored President, the sage and bishop of Edisto Island, will be there to match you with his wit, and lead the Convention to higher heights with his keynote annual message. Dr. G. W. Long, the Registrar, will be a familiar figure of the Convention. Dean H. M. Scott will take care of his side of the work. Miss Lucy Laney will meet you with a smile and feed you. Miss Trotty will be on the job to minister every possible comfort to the ladies. Rev. Mitchell will make you lift up your voices like trumpets. Dr. McCoy, our Director, will see that everything goes well, so that parents may feel safe to know that their sons and daughters will be safeguarded in every particular.

We look with pleasure to the return of Mrs. A. G. Snively, of the Board of National Missions, whose presence and personality charm the Convention.

Of course, Mr. J. M. Somern-dike, our Superintendent of Sunday School Missions, will be there to help in every way possible and give us the benefit of his rich store of knowledge.

The writer has had the pleasure of being intimately connected with the Synodical Convention and School of Methods since its set up in Jacksonville, Fla., some years ago. He has served the Convention in various capacities. He is in position to say that the Schools of Methods established in the four Synods are great agencies in the line of religious education. Each year these Conventions have made progress, adding new features and widening their scope of work to meet the demands and needs of consecrated leadership

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