

LAW AND ORDER AND THE NEGRO

BY BOOKER T. WASHINGTON

FIFTH PAPER IN THE STORY OF THE NEGRO

NOT infrequently I hear it said that, since the overthrow of the Reconstruction governments, and particularly since the passage of the disfranchisement laws, the Negro has lost his place in Southern politics. This depends, to some extent, on what one means by politics. Negroes still vote in all the Southern States, though the number of Negro voters has been very greatly curtailed in some States, and particularly in those which suffered most from the vices and mismanagement of the Reconstruction governments. Negroes still hold offices under the Federal Government, and the proportion of Negroes in the civil service of the United States is constantly increasing.

Aside from the number of votes cast, however, and the number of offices which these votes controlled, Negroes probably exercise a greater influence on public order and public policy in the Southern States to-day than they ever did before. Directly and indirectly, through their churches and through their schools; through their doctors of medicine, lawyers, and business men; through their lodges, banks, corporations, clubs, law and order leagues, etc., Negroes are exercising a very large and a very positive influence upon the lives of the communities in which they live. As an illustration of what I mean I want to relate, as briefly as I am able, the story of the Colored Law and Order League of Baltimore, Maryland.

In the city of Baltimore there is one of the largest and most populous colored neighborhoods in any city in the world. I have already referred to this neighborhood as one which possibly contains more homes and better homes owned and occupied by colored people than any other similar district in any of the large cities of the country.

This district extends along Druid Hill Avenue from Utah Street to North Avenue, and with the adjacent streets covers an area a mile and a half long, by

from one-sixteenth to one-half a mile wide. The upper part of this district is given up to the better class of residences, usually three-story brick buildings, fronting directly on the street, and is comparatively free from saloons or other nuisances. A few years ago this region was inhabited by some of the best white families in the city, but as the city has grown these people have moved out into the suburbs, and the colored people have come in to take their places.

The lower end of Druid Hill Avenue is a district of quite a different character. In a section seven blocks long and two blocks wide there were, a few years ago, before the Colored Law and Order League began its work, no less than forty-two saloons. What made this situation the more disagreeable, and even dangerous, was the fact that these saloons were located in close proximity to most of the Negro churches and Negro schools in that district. For example, there were, all in close proximity to the saloons I have mentioned, fifteen churches, twelve schools, one home for old people, one home for friendless children, the Colored Young Men's Christian Association, and the Colored Young Women's Christian Association. In addition to the forty-two saloons there were, in this same region, numerous dance-houses, billiard-halls, and club-rooms, where gambling was openly carried on, which frequently became places of assignation for girls and young women.

The better class of colored people on Druid Hill Avenue had long looked with concern on the condition of things that existed in the lower part of the district. But it is not an easy thing for Negroes to take the initiative in matters of this kind. For one thing, Southern white people, as a rule, do not expect it of them, and it is true of the race as it is of an individual, that you rarely get from them anything more or better than you expect. Another thing that, perhaps, made the colored people hesitate was the fact that a large

proportion of the saloons in the district, more than half, although they were supported by Negroes, were kept by white people. Besides that, these places seemed to have a sort of police protection, which, because it was long established, would be hard to break up. It was, perhaps, true also that in Baltimore, as in some other cities, saloons and dens of vice which were not allowed to exist in other parts of the city were permitted to take refuge in the districts where the masses of the colored people lived. For this reason many people have been led to assume that respectable and industrious Negroes do not have the same objection to the presence of vice among them that other people have.

It was the Atlanta riot, I have been told, that set the better class of colored people to thinking, and led them finally to the conviction that this reform movement must be undertaken by themselves. In October, 1906, a meeting was called by the Rev. John Hurst, one of the most progressive of Baltimore's colored ministers. At this meeting there were present W. Ashbie Hawkins, one of the leading colored lawyers of the city; Dr. Howard E. Young, a druggist; Dr. Whitfield Winsey, a physician who had practiced for thirty years among the colored people; Dr. Thomas S. Hawkins, one of the younger colored physicians of the city; Heber E. Wharton, vice-principal of one of the colored public schools; Harry T. Pratt, a grade supervisor in the public schools; Dr. J. H. N. Waring, Principal of the Colored High School; the Rev. E. F. Eggleston, pastor of the Grace Presbyterian Church; and the Rev. J. Albert Johnson, who shortly afterward became a bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

At this first meeting it was decided to make a careful study of the actual conditions among the colored people in the city. The Committee divided themselves into sub-committees. One of these made a study of the sanitary conditions, another investigated the moral influence surrounding the schools.

One of the facts which the Committee learned from a study of a map furnished by the Health Office was that a narrow street called Biddle Alley, running off

from Druid Hill Avenue, was the "tuberculosis center" of the State. This meant that in that particular region there were more deaths from tuberculosis than at any other point in the whole State of Maryland. One line from the report of the Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor indicates at least one cause for this condition. The report stated that of the two hundred and fifteen houses in Biddle Alley seventy-one had leaky roofs.

In these narrow alleys, however, tons of washing were gathered every week from the best homes in the city, to be laundered by the Negro washerwomen who lived in this district. This condition is, of course, not different from what may be found in almost any other Southern city, but it makes clear the danger that threatens the more well-to-do portion of the population when the people who work for them and are dependent upon them are thus neglected and allowed to live in filthy, unwholesome, and immoral surroundings.

As the Committee progressed in their investigation and sought to lay their plans to improve the conditions that they had discovered, they were made to feel their dependence upon the white people of the city and their inability to accomplish anything unless they secured their support. Liquor boards had been accustomed to ignore the protests of the colored churches. Police boards were not inclined to consider their complaints. There seems to have been a general feeling that colored people were either themselves so criminal, or so disposed to shield and protect criminals of their own race, that their protests against lawlessness and lawbreaking were not to be taken seriously. It became absolutely necessary, therefore, that the Committee should secure the support of the influential white people of the city if they hoped to be successful in the campaign they had planned.

The next move, therefore, was to appoint a sub-committee to secure the active interest of leading white men. This committee visited the late Daniel C. Gilman, ex-President of Johns Hopkins University; Mr. Douglas H. Wylie, at that time President of the Chamber of Commerce; Mr. Eugene Levering, President of the

Commercial National Bank ; Bishop Harper, head of the Episcopal Church in the Baltimore Diocese ; Mr. Joseph Packard, at that time President of the Board of School Commissioners ; Mr. Robert H. Smith, a leading lawyer ; Mr. John C. Rose, United States District Attorney, who subsequently acted as legal adviser for the Committee ; Mr. Isaac Cate, a retired capitalist ; Mr. John M. Glenn, Secretary of the Sage Foundation ; Judge Alfred S. Niles, of the Supreme Court of Maryland ; and Mr. W. Hall Harris, city postmaster.

All of these men, as soon as the matter was fairly presented to them, showed the heartiest interest in the plans and purposes of the Committee. The members of the Committee found, however, that there were certain questions which continually occurred, to which they felt compelled to find a definite answer. For instance, one of the questions that was frequently asked was whether or not the saloons and dives which they wanted suppressed, and the conditions of immorality surrounding them, were not due, for the most part, to the idleness and laziness of the colored people. A study of the statistics compiled by the United States Census Bureau showed, however, that a larger percentage not only of the colored women but of the colored men of Maryland were at work than is true of the whites.

The Committee were frequently asked in regard to the home life of the colored people. In reply to this inquiry the Committee pointed out that, while the conditions in Negro homes are in many cases not what they should be, nevertheless the rapid increase in the ownership of homes, particularly in the Druid Hill district, indicated that there was an upward movement in this direction, and this is true not only in the cities, but in the country districts as well. The statistics of the United States Census Bureau show, for instance, that the colored farmers of the State own 57 per cent of the farm lands they till.

Another question frequently asked of members of the Committee concerned the effect of education upon the Negro. One of the men, I was informed, who was most helpful to the Committee in its work did not believe that the education paid the State what it cost, or was of

any particular value to the Negro himself. In reply to this question, the Committee was able to show that the Colored High School, which has been in existence more than twenty-five years, in all its history had furnished but one inmate for a jail or penitentiary. The Committee was able to show, not only that this school had not made criminals of its students, but that, on the contrary, its former students and graduates were nearly all of them engaged in occupations in which they were more useful to the community than they otherwise could have been.

In order to illustrate the value of the education of the Negro to the community at large, the Committee cited the history of a Negro criminal, Ike Winder by name, who had murdered a toll-gate keeper in Baltimore County. To arrest, try, imprison, and execute Ike Winder cost the State \$2,000 more than it cost to educate one of the graduates of the Colored High School. Assuming that Ike Winder, if he had graduated from the high school, would have done as well as the other graduates, the State lost not only the money expended in convicting and executing him, but it lost the economic value of an educated citizen. The Committee estimated that the average earnings of an ignorant Negro in the State of Maryland were not much more than fifteen dollars a month, while the average earnings of an educated Negro averaged about seventy-five dollars a month.

The full and frank discussion of these questions between the members of the Committee and representative white citizens whom they visited showed that there was a basis for co-operation between the best whites and the best blacks of the city. The result was the formation of a joint plan of action in which both races might unite their efforts. It was decided, among other things, to appoint an advisory committee of the whites to act in conjunction with a similar committee of the colored people.

The first thing attempted was the organization of a larger and more representative body of colored men, to be known as the Law and Order League. The purpose of this Law and Order League was, first of all, to create a public spirit among the masses of the colored people

could be positively opposed to all forms of vice, immorality, and crime, such as are fostered by the low saloon and dive. Petitions were drawn up and sent to the Liquor Board and the Police Board for the purpose of securing a better enforcement of the law and, if possible, a suppression of some of the more notorious saloons in the district. A series of meetings were held at Grace Presbyterian Church, in which the colored ministers, doctors, lawyers, and business men all took part. In this way a campaign was begun to give Baltimore's colored children a real chance in life.

A Law and Order League was formed and a petition to the Liquor License Board was drawn up. A bill was drawn up for presentation to the Legislature to prevent the sale of liquor in certain sections of Baltimore.

Finally it was decided, in order to arouse sentiment in favor of the work of the League among the white people, to take measures to present their case to the ministers of both races. Members of the Committee appeared before the Association of Presbyterian, Congregational, and Reformed Church ministers, before the Ministerial Union, the Methodist Ministers' Association, before the African Methodist Episcopal Ministers' Association and the Colored Ministerial Union. One of the ministers who was most helpful to the Committee, I was informed, was an ex-Confederate chaplain, and three or four of the other white men who took an active interest in the work had been Confederate soldiers.

After the petition drawn up by the Law and Order League had been approved by the Advisory Committee of white men, it was presented to the Board of Liquor License Commissioners. Perhaps because of the source from which the petition came, it created considerable comment in the newspapers. The Baltimore Sun, in commenting upon it, said:

The Liquor License Board's action upon the petition of many good citizens for a reduction of the number of licenses for saloons at certain points in northwest Baltimore is awaited with much interest by that portion of the public which is concerned in the good order of that section of the city. It is a section which has not in the past had the best reputation for freedom from acts of violence and disorder on the part of Negro

roughs and bad characters, and this is believed to be connected with the fact that in a comparatively small area there are as many as forty-five saloons, of which eight are conducted by Negroes. As a considerable portion of the Negro population of the city has its habitat there, it is interesting to note that the most urgent advocates of a reduction of the number of the saloons are the Colored Law and Order League, with many colored ministers, teachers, and lawyers. . . . The white element of the northwestern section is also concerned to have eliminated, as far as possible, the danger to peace and order created by the objectionable places in its neighborhood. It is clearly up to the Liquor License Board to exercise, in the public interest, the wide discretion it possesses. When saloons are excessively numerous and a menace to good people, licenses may and should be withdrawn till the quota for each neighborhood is within reasonable limits.

An interesting feature of the struggle was the petition sent in by property-holders on McCulloh Street. McCulloh Street immediately adjoins Druid Hill on the north, and marks the boundary between the white and the colored districts. The people in this street bitterly resented the "invasion" of Druid Hill Avenue by the blacks. Their action in coming to the support of the Law and Order League was consequently a great and welcome surprise.

One of the points brought out in the discussion before the Board of Liquor License Commissioners was that the presence of so large a number of saloons in this neighborhood had depreciated the value of the property in some cases as much as 100 per cent. There was a disposition at first to charge this depreciation in value to the presence of colored people. It was asserted that colored people always lowered the value of property. This charge was easily disproved by showing that on the upper end of Druid Hill Avenue, in the neighborhood into which the better class of colored people were moving, property was actually selling at higher prices than it had reached when it was inhabited wholly by whites. One of the first colored men to buy property in the upper Druid Hill district bought a house in a row in which prices have advanced over sixty per cent. It is said that houses in this neighborhood rent and sell for from twenty to fifty per cent higher than prevailed when the neighborhood was white.

The testimony offered by the colored people, by the men who owned the saloons, and by the police was so conflicting that the Liquor License Commissioners determined to make a personal inspection. They found eleven saloons openly violating the law, and determined that these eleven should not be relicensed. The next day the Baltimore News gave the following account of the results of the inspection made by the License Commission :

The Board of Liquor License Commissioners deserve, and will receive, public commendation for their refusal yesterday to grant eleven saloon licenses which the Law and Order League protested against. The saloons are situated on Druid Hill Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, and adjacent streets, and have been the subject of grave complaint. President Howard and his associates could not signalize the close of their term of office better than by setting such an example to the incoming Liquor License Commissioners.

There is one development in connection with the hearings in these cases which calls for more than passing notice, and that is the testimony of the police as to the character of the saloons. It is a remarkable thing that, with so many respectable people in a neighborhood complaining about these saloons, the police—who should be most familiar with conditions—could find nothing wrong about them. Worse than this, in the case of saloons so plainly objectionable that the Liquor License Commissioners, on personal inspection, discover reason enough for refusing licenses, policemen are found blandly swearing that they are decent, orderly places.

The report of the Liquor License Commissioners is a serious indictment of the credibility of policemen as witnesses in hearings of this character, and suggests the need of a searching investigation to ascertain why the police are ignorant of conditions in the neighborhood in question, which are shown to be shockingly bad.

The rejection of the application of the eleven saloons for renewal of their liquor licenses was immediately followed by renewed applications under other names. But the Law and Order League had the support of all the best white and colored people in the city, and the licenses were not renewed.

I have described the work of the Baltimore Law and Order League¹ at some length because it illustrates the way in

¹ A more complete account of the "Work of the Colored Law and Order League" will be found in the publication of the Committee of Twelve, by James H. N. Waring, under that title.

which the better element in both races are quietly getting together, in many parts of the South, in order to bring about an improvement in conditions which are dangerous to both races. Similar efforts in other directions and on a smaller scale are being made in many of the smaller cities in the Southern States. Even where these movements have not been wholly successful, the effort of the two races to get together in the way I have described seems to me a hopeful sign, and one on which we cannot place too much emphasis.

In regard to the political influence of the Negro, I might say, also, that close observation in every State in the South convinces me that while the Negro does not go through the form of casting the ballot in order to express his political influence to the extent that the white man does, in every Southern community there is a group of property-holding men, and often women, of high character, who do always exert political influence in the matters that concern the protection and progress of their race. Sometimes this influence is exerted individually, sometimes in group, but it is felt nevertheless. I know any number of Negroes in the South whose influence is so strong because of their character that their wish or word expressed to a local or State official will go almost as far as the word of any white man will go. There is a kind of influence that the man exerts who is prosperous, intelligent, and possesses high character, a kind of influence that is intangible and hard to define, but which no law can deprive him of.

I do not mean to suggest that the sort of personal influence I have described is in any way a substitute for the ballot, or can be expected to take its place. It ought to be clearly recognized that, in a republican form of government, if any group of people is left permanently without the franchise they are placed at a serious disadvantage. I do not object to restrictions being placed upon the use of the ballot, but if any portion of the population is prevented from taking part in the government by reason of these restrictions, they should have held out before them the incentive of securing the ballot in proportion as they grow in

property-holding, intelligence, and character.

I have already referred, in another part of this narrative, to the town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi. This town, and the colony of which it is the center, is one of the few places in this country in which the government is carried on entirely by Negroes. A few years ago I made a special study of this town, and I was very much impressed with a statement, which I heard frequently repeated, that Mound Bayou was one of the most orderly communities in the Yazoo Delta.

The records of the Mayor's court show that, as Delta towns go, Mound Bayou is a remarkably quiet and sober place. There have been but two homicides in twenty years. Both of these were committed by strangers—men who drifted into the community in the early days before the local self-government and the traditions of the town had been established. One of the men killed was Benjamin T. Green, who was the partner of Isaiah T. Montgomery in the early days of the town. The man who committed this crime was afterward identified as a fugitive from justice, who was wanted for some desperate crime committed in the vicinity of Mobile. The murder was the result of a trivial altercation in regard to a box of tacks.

During the whole twenty years of the town's existence only three persons have been sent to the circuit court for trial. Two of these were men convicted of theft. Since the town obtained its charter, in 1898, there have been, up to February, 1907, but 163 criminal cases tried in the town. Of these, fifty were committed by strangers or by men who had come into town from the surrounding community. Twenty-eight cases were either never tried or were of so trivial a nature that no fine was imposed. Sixty-four were cases of disturbing the peace.

It is interesting to read the records of the Mayor's court. They are an index to the life of the village, and reflect the changing current of public opinion in regard to the moral discipline and order of the town.

In July, 1902, the records show that fourteen persons were arrested and fined for failure to pay the street tax. Every

citizen of the town is required to do three dollars' worth of work on the streets every year. Some had neglected to pay this labor tax, and allowed the street to fall into a condition of neglect. As a result of a discussion of the matter in the town council, a number of the delinquents were arrested and compelled to pay fines amounting to \$3.50 and costs amounting to \$1.40 each.

Again, in 1904, a man was arrested for gambling. He had established what is known in sporting parlance as a "crap" game, and on Saturday nights a number of young men of the village were accustomed to gather at his place to gamble. He was repeatedly warned, and finally the town marshal and some of the more substantial citizens made a raid upon the place and arrested fifteen persons. The cases were dismissed after each man had paid a fine of two dollars. A year later another man was arrested for running a "blind tiger"—selling liquor without a license. He formerly owned a store in the town, but began selling liquor, then commenced to drink, and was rapidly going to the dogs. After his place had been closed he went out into the country and took up farming again. It is reported that he is doing well there.

During the year 1905 there were several disturbances in the town which were traced directly to the illicit liquor sellers. Men would come into the town on Saturdays to do their marketing, fall to drinking, and end in a fight. Things became so bad at last that a public meeting was held in regard to the matter. As a result of this meeting, the town marshal, the mayor, and the treasurer were appointed to get evidence and secure the conviction of those who were guilty. Six persons were convicted and fined at that time. One of these, a woman, left town. Another is still under suspicion, and the rest, now on their farms, have become respectable citizens.

To my mind, the interesting fact in regard to these prosecutions is that they served not merely to correct a public abuse, but to reform the men who were prosecuted. In most cases these men went back to the farms and became useful members of the community.

It seems to be pretty well agreed that

The moral conditions of the Mound Bayou colony are better than those in other Negro settlements in the Delta. Some years ago, when the question was an "issue" in the community, a committee was appointed from each of the churches to make a house-to-house canvass of the colony in order to determine to what extent loose family relations existed. The report of this committee showed that there were forty families in the colony where men and women were living together without the formality of a marriage ceremony. As a result of this report the people of the town gave notice that these forty couples would have to marry within a certain length of time or they would have to be prosecuted. Nearly all of them acted upon this suggestion; the others moved away.

"Since then," said Mr. Montgomery, the founder of the colony, in speaking about the matter, "we have had no trouble of this kind. Upon occasions, the women who are conspicuous in towns and cities, and who travel in the Delta, making the various camps on pay-days, and who more or less infest the larger plantations, have tried to get a footing here, but have never succeeded. They can get no place to stay, and have to leave on the next train. This is now generally known, and we have no trouble on that score."

When I asked Mr. Montgomery how he explained the fact that they had been able to obtain such good results in the way of order and morality among the people of the colony, he said: "I attribute it to the force of public opinion. The regulations that we enforce have public sentiment behind them. The people recognize that the laws, when they are enforced, represent the sentiment of the community and are imposed for their own good. It is not so easy for them to realize that where the government is entirely in the hands of white men."

One thing that has helped to maintain order in the colony is the fact that Bolivar County prohibits the sale of liquor. More than once the liquor men have attempted to pass a law that would license the selling of liquor in the county. Some years ago a determined effort was made to repeal the prohibition law. In order

to secure the vote of Mound Bayou, which seems to have the balance of power in the county on this question, a "still hunt" was made among the voters in the community. A plan was arranged by which a saloon was to be established in the town and one of the citizens made proprietor.

"This scheme came very near going through," said Mr. Montgomery. "The plan was all arranged before we heard of it. Then we called a meeting, and I simply said to the people that experience in our own town had taught us that a saloon was a bad thing to have in the community. I said that if the law was passed, a colored man might run the saloon here, but in the rest of the county the saloons would be in the hands of white men. We would pay for maintaining them, however, and we would be the ones to suffer. We voted the law down, and there has been no serious attempt to open the county to the liquor traffic since."

In a certain sense, it may be said that the Mound Bayou town and colony have been a school in self-government for the colonists. They have had an opportunity there, such as Negro people have rarely had elsewhere, to learn the real meaning of political institutions and to prepare themselves for the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that this is one of the few instances in which Negroes have ever organized and maintained in any Southern State a government which has gained the entire respect of the Southern people. A writer in a recent number of the *Planter's Journal*, published in Memphis, says:

Will the Negro as a race work out his own salvation along Mound Bayou lines? *Quien sabe?* These have worked out for themselves a better local government than any superior people has ever done for them in freedom. But it is a generally accepted principle in political economy that any homogeneous people will in time do this. These people have their local government, but it is in consonance with the county, State, and National governments and international conventions, all in the hands of another race. Could they conduct as successfully a county government in addition to their local government and still under the State and National governments of another race? Enough Negroes of the Mound Bayou type, and guided as they were in the beginning, will be able to do so.

In view of the oft-repeated statement that Negroes have made a failure of government wherever they have tried it, either in Africa or America, how can we account, we may ask, for the success of the Mound Bayou colony?

In the first place, I should say it was due in part to the fact that the colony is small. I think it will be found that in most cases where a people have learned to govern themselves they have taken their first lessons in small communities. In fact, government in the United States has grown gradually out of the Town Meeting, where the interests of all individuals were so closely knit together that each member was able to feel and understand his responsibility to every other as he could not so readily have done elsewhere.

Another reason why this town has succeeded thus far is, I believe, because it is a pioneer work of Negroes themselves. The men who came and settled in this town have had an opportunity to grow up with it, and the growth of the town has been an education to them. Besides, in this town Negroes are not merely inhabitants, but they are owners, and they feel the responsibility of ownership. They possess the land, they own the stores, the cotton-gins, the bank, and the cotton-seed oil mill.

More than any other one thing, however, the Mound Bayou colony owes its success, I suspect, to the vision, the enterprise, and the public spirit of the men who have been its leaders—Isaiah T. Montgomery, the founder, and Charles Banks. These men have clearly seen that their own permanent success is identified with the success of the people by whom they were surrounded, and that their greatest opportunities are in helping to build up the members of their own race.

I have spoken in what preceded of what Negroes are doing in the way of self-government in towns like Mound Bayou, and of what Negroes are doing through the Law and Order Leagues, as in Baltimore, to secure the enforcement of the law in the communities in which they live. I should like to say a word, in conclusion, of another organization which, although it has not sought to exercise any direct influence in securing good govern-

ment and the proper enforcement of the law, has done much to bring about better conditions in this and other directions among the people where it exists. I refer to what is known as the Farmers' Improvement Society of Texas, one of the most interesting of the many organizations of colored people which have sprung up since emancipation, and one that has exercised an inspiring and helpful influence upon the people it has reached.

This society, which had a membership in 1908 of 9,256 among the Negro farmers of Texas, was organized in 1895, under the leadership of R. L. Smith, of Paris, Texas. It was the outgrowth of a village improvement society which Mr. Smith organized in Freedmantown, which was the name given to the colored quarter of Oakland, Texas, where he was teaching at the time. It is an interesting fact, in this connection that Mr. Smith received the suggestion for the organization of this society from reading an article in the Youth's Companion describing the work of the Village Improvement Society in Litchfield, Connecticut. This circumstance suggests one of the benefits which the art of reading conferred upon the colored people of which we do not usually take an account.

While the first purpose of this society was to save money for its members by purchasing provisions in common and in large quantities, it eventually sought to improve its members in every direction. In order to do this Mr. Smith decided to adopt the forms of fraternal organizations and confer degrees, first upon those who succeeded in getting out of the chronic condition of debt in which they lived, and, second, upon those who, in the comprehensive language of Mr. Smith, "made the most progress in civilization."

The degrees were twelve in number. The first degree was conferred upon the member who succeeded in "running" himself three months without opening an account; the second, upon the member running himself six months; the third, nine months; and the fourth, twelve months. The fifth was conferred upon the members who maintained themselves the entire year and had a surplus of twenty-five dollars; the sixth, the same with a surplus of one hundred dollars; the sev-

enth, the same with a surplus of one hundred and fifty dollars; and the eighth, with a surplus of two hundred dollars; and so on up to the twelfth degree, which was called the Grand Patriarch degree, and entitled its possessor to membership in the annual convocation without election, "thereby creating," as Mr. Smith explains, "a permanent delegateship of successful members who had worked out their salvation and were actually fitted for leadership by growth in the essentials of civilization."

In 1907 members of the organization owned 71,439 acres of land, which were worth considerably over one million dollars. The estimated value of their live stock was \$275,000.

In 1906 the Farmers' Improvement Association, having raised among its members something over twelve hundred dollars, purchased land and started an Agricultural College. The purpose of the society was to provide a school in which their sons and daughters could have the sort of training that would prepare them to stay on the farm, and not leave it for the doubtful advantages of the city.

R. L. Smith is one of the younger generation of colored men. Born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1861, he was a student for a while during Reconstruction days at the University of South Carolina, but was eventually starved out when the law passed which cut off the funds for the

scholarships of negro students. He afterwards graduated at Atlanta University, returned to Charleston, and ran a Republican paper. That enterprise naturally failed with the downfall of the Reconstruction government in the South, and Mr. Smith decided to go to Texas and begin life anew as a teacher.

Although he had intended to keep out of politics after leaving South Carolina, he found himself, in 1895, running for the Legislature of Texas. Much to his surprise, he was elected, a majority of white voters having given him their support. "Since the white people," said Mr. Smith in relating this experience, "were kind enough to say that a man who felt so much interest in the upbuilding of his own race should be indorsed in some way by the whites, I thought that the race problem was solved sure enough."

Mr. Smith has continued in the work which he began, and, although he has had one or two offices under the Federal Government since that time, he has never permitted that to turn him aside from the important original work which he has undertaken for the improvement of the Negro farmers in Texas.

In spite of Mr. Smith's election to the Legislature, the race problem is not yet solved in Texas. Nevertheless, at our annual Negro Conference at Tuskegee, Mr. Smith has never failed to be present and to report progress.