

**THE NEGRO IN
BUSINESS LIFE**

Over a thousand negro delegates from all parts of the country attended the eleventh annual meeting of the National Negro Business League, which began its session in New York City on August 17. Among them were bankers, farmers, editors, insurance men, dry goods merchants, doctors, ministers, and representatives of many other professions and industries. The sessions were enlivened by stories and incidents, were dignified by serious presentation of what has already been achieved by the race, and were inspired by hearty hope and purpose for the race's future. Dr. Booker Washington, with real tact and skill, and also with invariable good humor, brought out the best that the delegates had to give, and his own address abounded in stimulating influence. He urged his people not to make the mistake of dwelling overmuch on the things they have not, but rather to glory in the opportunities they possessed, and he declared that in this country "the negro enjoys freedom of opportunity to get education, freedom of religious worship, to a degree not afforded any similar group of our people in the world." Dr. Washington did not, however, neglect to hold up to shame the blot cast upon civilization by the continuance of lynching; he referred to the fact that within the present summer no less than twenty-six colored men have been wantonly murdered by mobs without wrongdoing on their part. He pleaded for equal and exact enforcement of the law, in the interest not alone of the colored race, but of all races. As an evidence of the prosperity of the negro race Dr. Washington stated that the negroes of the country are adding from twelve to fifteen million dollars a year to their holdings of land, and that he believed that they are now

worth in the aggregate not far from six hundred million dollars. When, he added, he spoke of this great advance to President Eliot, of Harvard, Dr. Eliot declared, "No race in the world has made such progress in the same time." On the last day of the Convention the delegates received ex-President Roosevelt with immense enthusiasm, and listened to the first general public address he had made since his return from Africa. This address was strong in appreciation of what the negro has done and in practical encouragement and advice. A few sentences may be here quoted to show the trend of Mr. Roosevelt's suggestion of the right line of conduct for the negro in America :

When your neighbor likes and respects you, you have won your battle. The white man of the North does his worst work in interfering between the two peoples of the South, and his best work when he improves their relations. This League represents general constructive work for the race. It teaches you not to whine and cry about privileges you do not happen to have, but to make the best of opportunities at your doors. . . . No good American can fail to subscribe to the motto, "All men up and not some men down." If in any community the negro quarter is wretched and one of potential criminality, there is as much of menace to the white man in that condition as to the black.

You colored men and women, set your faces like flint against those who would preach to you only the gospel of hate, envy, and bitterness. Realize that the only way to help your race is not by preaching vindictiveness and hatred, but by leading your people up to prosperity through good citizenship. . . . An ounce of performance is worth a ton of complaint.