

The BROAD AX

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THE COLORED RACE AT ATLANTA.

Monument of Their Progress, as seen at the Great Cotton Exposition.—From a Village in Savage Life, to Banking, Invention and Fine Arts.

The thousands of visitors at the Atlanta Cotton States Exposition, are struck with surprise and wonderment at the magnitude and uniqueness of the exhibit of the negroes at this great show of the South. Many who come from the Northern states, or from foreign lands, expected to find the colored people's department filled with evidences of a rude and barbarous race. But all such were pleasantly disappointed; on the contrary they had the opportunity of beholding a characteristic Dahomey village, placed in contrast with the achievements of the race, in civilization, in literature, in industrial lines, in finance and in the high arts.

The building set apart for the exhibits of the negroes, was planned and constructed by members of that race, and all the different departments are in charge of colored people. The chief aim has been to show the capabilities and ingenuity of the race, even in an uncivilized state, and also to show their skill and intellectual progress when surrounded by the advantages of the whites.

The village representing the lowest savage life of darkest Africa, with its half-clothed, unkempt natives, proves a wonderful contrast with the surrounding evidences of culture and refinement of the American negroes. The exhibit also contains many things from Africa, showing what the race is capable of even without the aid of high civilization. There is a large collection of curios, gathered from the natives of Monrovia and Sierra Leone. Some of these specimens of handicraft are really works of art, and excellent examples of their powers of invention; others prove their innate belief in a higher power, while all are interesting when shown in connection with the advance of the race in this country.

Among the hundreds of specimens of the primitive state, is a beautiful quilt, made by a native African. This sample of needle work is made of red, white, and green silk, representing the coffee tree in bloom. There is also a sacred robe made of flax, which is worn by the native priests. It is similar to a surplice, and is embroidered with figures,

each of which has some special significance.

A prayer is engraved on a smooth board, in curious hieroglyphics, only understood by a favored few. Evidence of their superstition is shown by peculiar charms, such as a bit of fur worn on the arm, to guard against the dangers of war; others worn on the neck, and still others around the waist. There are spoons to be carried by each individual, for fear of being conjured by using that of another. Slave whips, with knotted leather straps, curious needle-books, handbags, leather water bottles, an African war-drum, or "tom-tom," powder horns, swords, war knives, immense hats for both men and women, and bracelets made of black porcelain and elephant hoofs. But their greatest skill is shown in hand-woven mattings, luxurious hammocks, carved calabashes, used as dishes, and carved canes.

Near to this exhibit, is a corner reserved for the work of the ex-slaves of this country. There is a large display of canned fruits, preserves, jellies and pickles, delicious in appearance and the work of one woman. A beautiful Mosaic table, constructed of thirty-five kinds of wood, from Georgia, and contains, in all 736 pieces. A white spread has been knitted from common wrapping twine, which came around packages from time to time; not a piece was bought. A "tidy," made on the same plan, with colored twine, nicely shaded. A silk quilt, made by a woman 70 years of age, is composed of at least 1000 pieces. The Bible quilt, made by a poor, ignorant slave, who could not read, and whose knowledge of the Bible was from the stories told her by others. Each square represents one of these stories, and it is not only curious, but amusing, to see the impressions these stories made upon the mind of one who could not understand them.

There are specimens of the ingenuity of the colored boy. One of these is a miniature brick house, the bricks themselves having been made by the young builder. Another little house is made of corn stalks by a Tennessee boy, who had never lived in a city. The house represents an elegant cottage with mansard roof, and furnished with corn-stalk furniture. The entire work occupied a year in its construction, all being made with a ten cent pocket knife. A small engine made by a boy from Athens, Ga., is perfect in every detail, being a locomotive about seven feet in

length, and carrying 100 pounds of steam. A bicycle is exhibited, every part of which is made by a Virginia boy, this being one of the three which he has turned out. He seems to have wonderful inventive genius, as he has no tools or machinery to work with, save those he makes himself, on the farm he lives.

W. B. Smith, also of Virginia, has built a model of the United States gunboat *Raleigh*, which compares well with those shown in the government building.

The exhibits of the schools take up the majority of the space, as it is through them that the average negro has developed into a progressive citizen. These displays are the products of students, showing their varied talents. It is a surprise to find there are so many and such different kinds of schools in the South. Among the many, we mention the Spelman Seminary, a training school for nurses. The negro is naturally a good nurse being gentle, apt and sympathetic. The exhibit consists of a daintily furnished room, with an attendant as an example of their proficiency in that line.

Each southern state, is represented by its schools, besides several from the district of Columbia. The Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute has the largest and finest exhibit of all, and is, perhaps, the leading colored school in the world. The principle upon which it is founded, is that of "self help," and it is evident from what is seen here, that there is no department, either in the industrial or academic line, that is not thoroughly taught. A large glass case contains specimens of scientific farming; there are also profuse samples of oats, corn, sugar cane, cotton, vegetables and canned fruits. Samples of brickmaking, complete sets of hand-carved furniture, carriages, and wagons from the wheelwright shop, steel tools of all kinds from the blacksmith shop, tin sets and kitchen utensils from the tin shop, also shoes, harness, readymade clothing, ladies' dresses and all kinds of fancy work. There are also exhibits showing the work of the theological and medical schools; and also copies of books written and printed by the members of the colored race.

In literature the proof of their intellectual abilities is shown by the books published by them: since the war, there being over 150 books published, whose authorship was unknown; a number of which went through several editions upon their

own merits, so it cannot be said that sentiment ruled their reading. In an exhibit marked "miscellaneous," are some seventy volumes, all written by colored men and women. The few items mentioned here, will give but a feeble idea of the magnitude of the display from the various schools, which are under the exclusive control, and for the exclusive benefit of the negro race.

The abilities of the colored men as financiers, are a matter of surprise to many of the visitors, and the exhibits of banking houses attract much attention. There is a noted one from Richmond, Va., and gives interesting information as to its financial condition. This is the first colored savings bank; was founded by W. W. Browne, of Georgia, and reports a surplus of \$25,000, and over \$60,000 to the credit of its depositors. Another is in the South Carolina department—that of the South Carolina Banking Association, of Florence.

In a portion of the building, is an exhibit of the patents of colored men. This is said not to do them justice, as much more could have been added to this department. However, a number of successful inventions are shown, that have brought their inventors a handsome return. Among them is the Reynolds' car ventilator, which is used on the Pullman cars; a fire escape ladder; a lubricator; an overshoe for horses, and an evaporating pan for hot air registers.

The art exhibit is very fine, indeed, and would do credit to any race of people on earth. There are large collections of crayons, pastels and oil paintings, prominent among which are portraits of Fred. Douglass and Blanche K. Bruce, and a painting of a French battlefield called "Abandoned." A display of photography, by Daniel Freeman, commands the admiration of all visitors.

In sculpture, real art is shown in a number of pieces. Of those showing rare talent, is W. C. Hill, as he never had a lesson given him. "The negro with chains broken," "The obstinate shoe," and the bust of "Douglass," all works of his hands, receive much praise. A bust of Charles Sumner, is pointed out with pride, as the work of E. Lewis, a colored sculptor of unusual talent, who is now residing in Rome.

A painting, by H. O. Tanner, now of Paris, receives many compliments. In the North Carolina exhibit is a painting, entitled

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