

THE ANTI-NEGRO RIOTS IN ATLANTA

By THOMAS GIBSON

THE MATTER I SEND IS ACCURATE, AND WITHOUT COLOR OR PREJUDICE. I HAVE TOLD THE WORST, BUT NO MORE. SOUTHERN READERS WILL GREATLY APPRECIATE ONE STORY WHICH IS FAIR. SOME OF THE MATTER FROM HERE HAS BEEN VERY MUCH OVERDRAWN.—An Extract from the Author's Letter to the Editor

THE principal business street of Atlanta bears two names—the south end, Whitehall, and the north end, with which we have to deal, being Peachtree. The principal intersecting street also has two names, that part of the street running west of Peachtree being Marietta Street, and the eastern end of the same street being called Decatur, Peachtree being the dividing line. The junction of Peachtree, Marietta, and Decatur streets may be called the business centre of the city. Walking west, north, or south of this focusing point, one sees the ordinary sights of a thriving Southern city; but only two blocks to the east, on Decatur Street, cheap frame buildings begin to appear: pawnbrokers' shops, cheap saloons, basement dives, and worse. The population in this quarter consists almost entirely of negroes. White men—mostly foreigners, Russian Jews and Greeks—run many of the saloons, pawn-shops, and restaurants which cater to a negro trade. On Saturday nights this locality is crowded with negroes. Four blocks from Peachtree, on Decatur Street, one may see literally thousands of half-drunken negro men and women. The man who has the temerity to venture there is in the very worst part of Atlanta, and in the hatching-place of negro criminals.

At six o'clock on Saturday evening, September 22, the localities described presented no unusual appearance. There was, however, a general topic of discussion. Almost daily for a week, the newspapers had published accounts of assaults on white women, and on this particular day there had been reported four separate attempted assaults of this character, in Atlanta. Men gathered in little groups and discussed the situation. On every side one heard the same words, "What are we going to do about it?" and the emphatic statement, "Something *must* be done." There were no signs of disorder, but the crowd continued to grow larger, and the discussions more animated. A great many rough, half-drunken men and boys from sixteen to twenty-one years of age swelled the crowd.

At 8.30 a man mounted a dry-goods box in front of the Kimball House, which stands on the corner of Decatur and Pryor streets, one block east of Peachtree Street. This man harangued the crowd about him and incited them to riot. Then a negro messenger came by on a bicycle, and was knocked off the wheel. He arose and was knocked down again. Then an unknown negro on the edge of the crowd stabbed a white boy in the thigh. By this

time thousands of people had gathered in the vicinity, and the race riot had begun.

At nine o'clock Mayor Woodward made his way through the crowd, and mounted the same dry-goods box from which the incendiary speech had been made, and begged the crowd to disperse and go home. He was listened to in absolute silence, and at the conclusion of his speech the chasing of passing negroes went on as before; citizens on the outskirts of the crowd warned negroes to turn back, and in most cases they did. Then a body of over a thousand men and boys moved east on Decatur Street to Central Avenue and attacked a negro skating-rink, but were turned back by the police. Again the Mayor appealed to the crowd, again it listened respectfully, cheered him heartily, and resumed the chasing and pelting of negroes.

Mayor Woodward stepped to a fire-alarm box and sent in a general alarm. Every engine in the city responded. The Mayor called the Chief to him and pointed to the mob: "Drown them out," he said, tersely.

The firemen promptly turned the hose on the crowd, which cheered lustily, and shifted its base out of range of the water. The negroes had all disappeared by this time, but a trolley-car with negro passengers came by; there were white women on the same car, and this seemed to infuriate the mob. Cries of "kill them," "lynch them," came from all sides. The car was stopped, and a crowd of half-mad men boarded it and beat the negro occupants to the floor. On this car, it is claimed, three negroes were left dead under the seats.

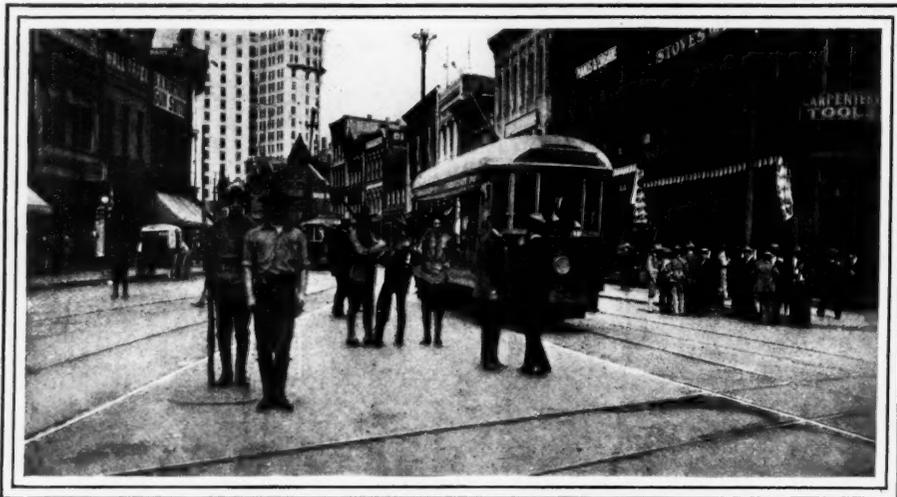
Then the mob separated into several divisions; one division moved west on Marietta Street to where the Post-office stands. Across the street from the government building was a negro barber shop; this the mob entered and destroyed, killed the two negro barbers, dragged their bodies out into the street, and flung them into an alley. Across the street from the barber shop was a Greek fruit-store. Some one cried that a negro had taken refuge there, and the crowd at once proceeded to demolish the stand.

The mob, like all mobs, grew fiercer and more bloodthirsty as the night wore on. Such scenes as those described above were enacted over and over again wherever a negro was found. How many were killed will probably never be known. Statements run from six to sixteen as to the victims of Saturday night. Probably



Squads of Georgia National Guardsmen patrolling Marietta Street, Atlanta, the Morning after the Outbreak to prevent a recurrence of the Rioting

THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN FROM THE SPOT WHERE THE MOB FORMED. THE POST-OFFICE, NEAR WHICH THE FIRST MURDER OCCURRED, IS THE TOWERED BUILDING ON THE RIGHT. IN THE BACKGROUND IS THE MONUMENT TO HENRY W. GRADY, IN THE SHADOW OF WHICH THREE NEGROES WERE KILLED



When the General Riot Call was Told the State Troops responded promptly and lined the Main Streets

AN HOUR AFTER THE TROOPS APPEARED THE MOB DISPERSED. THERE WAS NO FURTHER TROUBLE IN THE CITY, BUT RIOTING CONTINUED IN THE SUBURBS UNTIL PUT DOWN BY THE MILITARY

the lower number is nearest the truth. About twenty injured negroes were taken to the hospital.

The mob was now beyond all hope of control. All the saloons had been closed, and one was promptly smashed to supply the crowd with liquor. Every firearm in the Decatur Street pawnshops had been sold at high prices, and a hardware-store was broken open to secure fresh arms and ammunition.

At 12.20 o'clock on Sunday morning, fifteen slow strokes sounded on the big fire-bell—a general riot-call and the signal for the State militia. The troops responded promptly, and in an hour the mob melted away.

On Sunday the militia lined the main thoroughfares. Sheriff Nelms, with three deputies, patrolled the troublesome districts. There was no trouble to speak of on Sunday, and but little on Monday during the day. But on Monday night the trouble was renewed in the suburbs of the city. At Brownville, a negro settlement two miles south of Atlanta, on Monday night, Officer James Heard was shot and killed from ambush. In the battle that followed two negroes were shot dead, and three white officers were wounded. Two negroes suspected of complicity in the affair were arrested and brought to Atlanta. They were taken from a trolley-car one mile from the centre of the city by angry men and shot to death. A white woman who witnessed this, almost at her door, fell dead from fright and excitement.

At break of dawn Tuesday, September 25, a troop of cavalry and one company of infantry surrounded Brownville and captured 257 negroes, all of whom were armed. Two were killed trying to escape.

This is a brief and accurate account of the riots in Atlanta. No doubt the stories telegraphed to newspapers by excitable or sensational correspondents have grossly exaggerated the affair.

As to the attitude of the authorities and the best citizens of Atlanta, it may be said that the mob was composed principally of the very worst classes, with a large percentage of irresponsible boys. On Sunday morning hundreds of men were standing about the streets, and, as one man, they were deploring and denouncing the riot. The rioters were nowhere in evidence. Forty of the ring-leaders were sentenced Monday to long terms on the chain-gang, without the privilege of a fine, and, in addition, were held to the criminal courts. Every effort has been made by officials to prevent further outbreaks. Every saloon in the city has been closed indefinitely, and there are no side entrances. At this writing, September 25, one regiment of infantry, one battery of light artillery, one troop of cavalry, two hundred policemen, and five hundred deputy sheriffs are patrolling and guarding the city. No one is allowed to loiter on the streets, and every man who cannot explain his business is locked up promptly, be he white or black. When the Sheriff began swearing in deputies to support the law and order, fully a thousand

citizens were turned away from the Court-house steps after the requisite number had been secured.

At the request of many of the leaders of the colored race, every negro barber shop and restaurant in the city was closed.

The crime against womanhood which was the germ of this uprising has, of course, gone far to arouse a race hatred. The crime has been growing steadily, and critics must pause to consider that the effects of these assaults do not stop with their victims. The result is far-reaching terror. Every woman who is left unprotected for an hour is terror-stricken. The effect of the crime comes home in a measure to every family, whether they have been really endangered or not. The same blind cry goes up on all sides, "What are we going to do about it?" and no remedy is suggested.

Thoughtful people say there is one thing to be done about it, and it is being done. The

district in Atlanta, previously mentioned as the gathering and hatching place of criminal negroes, must be cleaned out. This work had been started several days before the riots began. Twenty-two licenses for negro restaurants and dives were revoked at the last meeting of the city council, and thirty-nine were laid aside for investigation. The conditions on Decatur Street are bad, but they are no worse than in other Southern cities, and such localities find a counterpart in the criminal districts of most cities, whether the criminals be white or black. Most of the dives are underground. Whiskey is sold at five cents a drink, or fifty cents a quart, and cocaine is easily procured. The walls of some of these dives are covered with pictures which do not admit of even a suggestion of a description. In one lodging-house visited by the writer, nine beds were found in one room, and there were beds in the kitchen where the morning meal was preparing. Cheap beer was sold in this place if ordered with meals. The price of a lodging was ten cents. All along this street are open-air fish-stalls, —mullet stands—where mullets are sold at a price determined by the age of the fish. I do not venture too far in my description of this district; it does not make nice reading. As to white foreigners who cater to negro trade and negro vice in this locality, it is left to the judgment of the reader which is of the higher grade in the social scale, the proprietors or their customers. That this plague-spot is responsible for much crime is unquestionably the case. The very lowest class of blacks gather there, and their minds are inflamed by cocaine, the miserable stuff called whiskey, bad pictures, and gross talk.

The district has had a subtle growth, and has been allowed to flourish without attracting much attention, until the growth of crime and the outbreak of September 22 aroused the people to its nature and influence.

In justice to the South it must be pointed out that such districts, in whatever city they have existed, have seldom been broken up until their presence has been made apparent by atrocities



A Squad of the State Troops at Sunrise after a Night's Vigil in Marietta Street

WHILE THE MILITIAMEN WERE ON DUTY IN THE PRINCIPAL THOROUGHFARES, SHERIFF NELMS, WITH THREE DEPUTIES, PATROLLED THE TROUBLESOME DISTRICTS ABOUT DECATUR STREET IN AN AUTOMOBILE



Looking North on Peachtree Street on the Sunday Morning following the Rioting

THE ANTI-NEGRO OUTBREAK OCCURRED ONE BLOCK DOWN DECATUR STREET, THE FIRST STREET TO THE RIGHT. THERE, IN FRONT OF THE KIMBALL HOUSE, A MAN MOUNTED A BOX AND MADE THE FIRST DESPERATE APPEAL TO THE CROWD

or crimes. The normal attitude of the Southern man to the negro is very widely misunderstood. The opinion that negroes are browbeaten or maltreated here is wholly fallacious. As a matter of fact, the Southerner knows the negro's incompetency and shortcomings, and puts up with them far more patiently than would a Northern employer of labor. It is only when the negro becomes insolent or criminal that anger is aroused. The Southerner looks upon the negro as belonging to a lower social and intellectual order, and treats him accordingly. He does not hate him, he simply looks down upon him, much as the residents of a Northern city look upon the lowest white element.

There is no attempt at argument of the merits of the race question in the above. The writer is a Northern man, for two years a resident of the South, and conditions are presented as found.

Whether the cleansing of the city will decrease crime and prevent future outbreaks and future outrages remains to be seen.

Most of the theories for the improvement of the negro are chimerical—the dreams of people who write or speak without a knowledge of actual conditions.

In this section mob violence and lynchings find no justification on the ground of laxity of laws. The negro criminal is dealt with severely and swiftly; in fact, he has, if anything, the worst of it before a jury.

If a student of the race question will come to the South and bring his theories with him, it is probable that before he has been here a year he will find that he cannot make comparisons between the negroes of the North and the South. They are very widely different. It is certain that unless his theory is entirely new and immensely forcible and practical, he will be sadly perplexed, and, perhaps, will soon be joining in that universal, unanswered cry which is heard on every side: "Something must be done. What are we going to do about it?"

OFFICERS OF THE ARMY AND NAVY COMMANDING OPERATIONS IN CUBA



BRIGADIER-GENERAL FREDERICK FUNSTON, WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF THE DISARMAMENT COMMITTEE WHICH HAS IN CHARGE THE TASK OF DISPOSING AMICABLY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY FORCES WHICH HAVE BEEN IN ARMS AGAINST THE LATE CUBAN GOVERNMENT. THE ATTITUDE OF THE REBELS HAS BEEN DOCILE



CAPTAIN SEATON SCHROEDER, COMMANDING THE UNITED STATES BATTLESHIP "VIRGINIA," WHO SUPERVISED THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE LANDING AND ENCAMPMENT OF THE AMERICAN MARINES IN HAVANA, AFTER THE ASSUMPTION BY THE UNITED STATES OF THE TEMPORARY CONTROL OF CUBA ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 29