

THE LESSON OF TULSA

ON the night of June 1 a newspaper despatch from Tulsa, Oklahoma, said: "The hospitals of Tulsa are filled with wounded and dying men tonight and the morgues are crowded with dead after twenty-four hours of rioting between white men and Negroes."

On the same day a woman stenographer in a Tulsa office wrote this moving letter to the editors of *The Outlook*:

To-day Tulsa is torn by a civil battle between the white and black races which is sickening to all right-minded, thinking people of this city. All of little Africa is burning; many people, both white and black, lie dead and wounded.

The cause of the trouble is the usual one. A young Negro is accused of attempting to attack a little elevator girl. He claims he intended no wrong, but of course his story has no chance of recognition.

I am a stenographer in a downtown office, and just now a large company of Negroes were marched through the street past my window, under the protection of white soldiers. They are taking them to the ball park, where they will be under protection. They are homeless, most of them innocent of any wrong-doing or even wrong thinking, helpless, dumbly wondering why this thing should be.

The whites here are much more to be blamed than the Negroes. It is largely an element of hoodlum white boys, craving excitement, and looking for any opportunity to start a race riot.

How long are such outrages going to be allowed? Cannot America find some means of preventing such terrible occurrences? The Negroes are with us here in America, though they did not ask to be brought here. There is wrong on both sides, but in some manner law and order must be maintained.

What caused the rioting, shooting, and burning that left in Tulsa a wake of deaths (at least thirty persons were killed), widespread suffering and destitution, thousands of homeless people, acres of smoldering ruins, a money loss

for the rest of the Nation? Tulsa is not essentially different from any American city in which there is a considerable Negro element. Contemplating the dark episode, almost any other city might echo the humble thanksgiving, "But for the grace of God there goes John Bunyan." So long as race feeling exists there is danger of such outbursts. Deprecate it all we please, the foundations of order are secured through effective police backed by a firm demand for law and order by all decent citizens and helped by the earnest desire of white and colored people to draw together in just and friendly civic relations and to abstain from forcing the questions of social relations to the front. Potentially disorderly elements are restrained by fear of the instruments by which society defends itself. Prompt and energetic action on the part of the peace officers at the first sign of trouble in Tulsa that Tuesday night would have prevented the riots. Governor Robertson, who arrived in the city soon after the disturbances were over, expressed a general opinion when he called the affair "damnable and inexcusable" and blamed the ineptitude of the officers responsible for maintaining order. At the outset a few well-directed policemen could have dispersed the trouble-makers at the Court-House. Once the mob spirit was aroused and armed crowds had gathered, the situation was out of control until the display of overwhelming force by several hundred determined Guardsmen.

What is the significance of this tragedy for the rest of the Nation? Tulsa is not essentially different from any American city in which there is a considerable Negro element. Contemplating the dark episode, almost any other city might echo the humble thanksgiving, "But for the grace of God there goes John Bunyan." So long as race feeling exists there is danger of such outbursts. Deprecate it all we please, the foundations of order are secured through effective police backed by a firm demand for law and order by all decent citizens and helped by the earnest desire of white and colored people to draw together in just and friendly civic relations and to abstain from forcing the questions of social relations to the front. Potentially disorderly elements are restrained by fear of the instruments by which society defends itself. Prompt and energetic action on the part of the peace officers at the first sign of trouble in Tulsa that Tuesday night would have prevented the riots. Governor Robertson, who arrived in the city soon after the disturbances were over, expressed a general opinion when he called the affair "damnable and inexcusable" and blamed the ineptitude of the officers responsible for maintaining order. At the outset a few well-directed policemen could have dispersed the trouble-makers at the Court-House. Once the mob spirit was aroused and armed crowds had gathered, the situation was out of control until the display of overwhelming force by several hundred determined Guardsmen.

In the long run civilization must depend on the education, tolerance, and intelligence of the mass of the people. But, as the experience of Tulsa and so many other cities shows, police forces cannot be demoralized by politics or by neglect except at risk of disaster.

This was the beginning of a series of battles between rapidly growing mobs of whites and blacks, which the small police force was unable to control. The fighting lasted into the morning. It resulted in the death of nine white men and more than twenty Negroes and in the wanton burning of the Negro residence district, leaving thousands of innocent persons homeless. Tulsa was impotent, but the Government of Oklahoma functioned promptly. By early morning the State was pouring National Guardsmen into the city. Governor Robertson proclaimed martial law, and the rioting abruptly ended. A citizens' committee with the local Red Cross unit at once took the situation in hand and organized relief work. Tulsa is a wealthy community. It cannot spare its Negro workers. At

room growth. It has a population of seventy-three thousand, of whom perhaps eight thousand are Negroes. The Negroes are employed chiefly in forms of service not sought by the whites. The men are porters, barbers, bootblacks, day laborers; the women cooks, charwomen, laundresses. There has been no industrial race friction.

The industrial depression had brought an unusual number of idle men from the oil fields to Tulsa. A few gathered at the Court-House where the Negro was confined. The sheriff ordered them away, but did not enforce his order. An altercation followed. Word spread that a lynching was contemplated. Several armed Negroes appeared. A Negro peace officer appealed to them to disperse, assuring them the prisoner would be protected. Most of them started away, but leaders called them back. Whites and blacks continued to gather. The police did nothing. Then a shot was fired and a white man fell.

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International

"FATHER D. C." (MEANING DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA) SHOWING WASHINGTON CHILDREN HOW TO KEEP THE PARKS CLEAN

Alton Bishop, as "Father D. C.," is giving a demonstration to the children of Washington as to the right way to keep the parks clean. This event was a feature of the inauguration of the American Forestry Association's Forest Protection Week at Rock Creek Park

of perhaps a million dollars? Superficially, the answer might be that it was a strange misunderstanding of facts. General Barrett, in command of the State Militia, is quoted in the papers as saying that the riot was caused by "an impudent Negro, a hysterical girl, and a yellow journal reporter." Again superficially, it may be said that this horror was caused by the misuse of a word; it was reported that a white girl had been "assaulted" by a colored man; the fact was, it now appears, that a bootblack stepped on an elevator girl's foot, that she slapped him, and he grasped her by the throat.

But the real causes lie deeper. Americans take the observance of law and order for granted. Civilization, they assume, has reached a stage where force is not needed. Then, under some comparatively slight provocation, the wild-beast element in society leaps up, the peace officers are unready, and we have the race riots of Washington, Omaha, East St. Louis, Chicago, and Tulsa. Especially is this true when race feeling is involved. Race aversion (from which few of us are free) easily becomes race prejudice; race prejudice is quickly fanned into race hatred; race hatred among the ignorant and violent elements, black and white, may at any moment blaze into race war.

The following account comes to The Outlook from a well-informed Western correspondent upon our telegraphic request:

Tulsa, the scene of the recent rioting, is an Oklahoma oil city of mush-