

The Poor Oppressed.*

By PROFESSOR D. B. WILLSON.

Gentlemen of the Theological class:

We greet you to-night, as you come to begin the studies of the session of 1912-13. We rejoice in the Fatherly care that has kept us. We magnify the grace that has led you to take up the great work of preaching the Gospel.

Among the signs of his Messiahship which Jesus gave to the disciples of John was this: "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." In the book of Psalms, we find this declaration of God's care of the poor: "Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith Jehovah; I will set him in the safety he panteth for."†

We are living in a day of vehement contention on behalf of the "common people," and against those who use them selfishly while they are serving them. Many races are thus dealt with, some of them but lately come to our shores. One race, early brought here for bondage, has had fifty years of emancipation, fifty years in which to give the service of free men. What has the half century done for them? My theme is, "The Poor Oppressed."

When the Civil War began in 1861, many of the negro race were held in bondage under the Con-

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†The Revision.

stitution and the laws, including that culmination of Federal protection of the system, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. It was a crime to shelter the fugitive. He must return to bondage.

The new President of March 4, 1861, born in poverty and in the midst of slavery, believed the system to be sinful. He thus phrased it: "If slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong." However, he took the oath of office, purposing to enforce this law, as other laws. So in the early period of the War, he rebuked John C. Fremont, who had been in 1856 the candidate of the new-born Republican party for President, but now was a Major-General in the Army: rebuked him for proclaiming liberty to the slaves within his command in the West, but he ignored the order of General Halleck, returning the escaping slaves to those who claimed them. He tried to save the institution, as it was included in the provisions of the Union; and the States, especially the border States, should witness his faithfulness. It was a sore problem to him.

General Butler at Fortress Monroe, brought face to face with the same question of the incoming fugitives, recognized their ready service, their usefulness. He took the claimants at their own word; they were seeking their property. He treated these helpers as the other property of the foe was treated, when needed, as "contraband of war"—a happy solution of the dilemma. This action gave the name that attached itself to the incoming slaves, a name that they bore both East and West during the War. They were "contrabands."

But the Union cause made little progress in the East. The road to Richmond was blocked. At Manassas on the 21st of July, 1861, only 34 miles from Washington, the army was turned back. It was again turned back on the Peninsula from before Richmond in the Seven Days' battle, June 26

to July 3, in 1862. These reverses deeply troubled the President. God went not forth with our armies.

On the 22nd of July, at the Cabinet meeting, he brought out a paper and read it to the Cabinet. It declared his purpose to proclaim emancipation to the slaves, in the contingency of their masters' persistent rebellion. He would wait 100 days for them to yield. When Mr. Seward, the Secretary of State, heard the paper, he observed that this was stretching out our hands to Ethiopia. Mr. Lincoln saw at once the force of this comment, and phrased the thought of Mr. Seward of his plan under the circumstances, that it was "the last shriek on the retreat." He laid the paper away, and waited, and prayed for victory. But the situation grew darker. The defeat of 1861 at Manassas was repeated on August 29-30 near the same place. The victorious army of the Confederates under General Lee was now emboldened to cross the Potomac, and after the battle of South Mountain on September 14, went forward on the way to Hagerstown, northward, the route afterwards taken by him in 1863: but now he was met by General McClellan on the field of Antietam and at Sharpsburg. He was halted on Friday, the 17th of September, and retreated the next day across the river. The National Cemetery there holds 4,667 Union dead, 3,261 of them known, 1,406 unknown, as marked on the upright cannon near the entrance. The word of this victory was slow in reaching Washington; but when it came, the President convened the Cabinet, and brought up the paper of July 22, just two months before, and declared his purpose to issue it, adding in a low tone that he had vowed to God to do this. Nothing now turned him from his purpose, not even the great reverse at the Rappahannock on the 13th day of December. The National Cemetery on Mary's Heights at Fredericksburg contains the

graves of the Union dead, and there also is a large cemetery of the Confederate dead. Mr. Lincoln held to his trust in God, having passed through the mental struggle as to duty, and in faithfulness to his word once spoken, he gave forth the Emancipation Proclamation on the 1st day of January, 1863. In this he said:

"I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and Government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States, wherein the people thereof respectively are in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit: (the list follows)

"And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within such designated States and parts of States are and henceforth shall be free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons. And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages. And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations and other places, and to

man vessels of all sorts in said service. And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

The sentence at the close was suggested by Mr. Chase, and the words are but little altered from the language of Mr. Chase. Mr. Seward had suggested the word "maintain."

That summer of 1863 Vicksburg, the Mississippi stronghold, surrendered; and at Gettysburg, on the slope of Cemetery Hill, the Confederate power reached its "high-water mark," so marked now on the field, both events of the 4th day of July, the day our people declared their independence of British power.

It has been often said, and not alone by Union men, that the War should have ended then. It continued for 21 months longer. Within that period, the ex-slaves had weapons of war placed in their hands; and again they gave ready service, in the East and West, with the negro soldiers of the North. When the Union army, baffled in the assault at Cold Harbor, crossed the James in June, 1864, and moved on Petersburg on the 15th of June, these troops showed great valor. Charles A. Dana, the Assistant Secretary of War, was then at the headquarters of the Army. He says in his Recollections: "General Smith told us that the negro troops fought magnificently, the hardest fighting being done by them. The forts they stormed were, I think, the worst of all. After the affair was over, General Smith went to thank them, and tell them he was proud of their courage and dash. He said they had no superiors as soldiers, and that hereafter he should send them into a difficult place as readily as the best white troops. They captured six out of the sixteen cannons which he

took" (page 220). When the city was encompassed, Mr. Lincoln went down from Washington and visited the army. Mr. Dana says: "As we came back, we passed through the division of colored troops which had so greatly distinguished itself under Smith on the 15th. They were drawn up in double lines on each side of the road, and they welcomed the President with hearty shouts. It was a memorable thing to behold him whose fortune it was to represent the principle of emancipation passing bareheaded through the enthusiastic ranks of those negroes armed to defend the integrity of the nation" (page 225).

Mr. Lincoln earnestly desired a permanent basis for the freedom of this people, and wrought for the adoption of the xiiith Amendment. It was a matter of deep concern to him that no one of them should ever be returned to bondage. He put forth effort for the admission of Nevada as a State, that another vote might be secured for ratification.* But it was months after he died that it was adopted, that is on December 18, 1865. It declares:

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

Two other amendments were adopted, affecting the negro and other races; the xivth Amendment on July 28, 1868:

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." (Section 1.)

The xvth Amendment on March 30, 1870:

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United

*Dana's Recollections of the Civil War, pages 174-177.

States or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude."

Though all this was done to protect the emancipated, yet the work was not fully done; it was incomplete. Congress had not provided for a Federal system of Education by the Amendments. Even the Freedmen's Bureau, established on the 3rd of March, 1865, closed its work, its educational work as well, in 1870. When Congress failed to provide for education in connection with enfranchisement, Charles Sumner shed tears, for he knew the conditions well, of a people left exposed to forces on either hand too mighty for them.

The friends of the negroes early moved in this matter of their education. Fifty-one years ago to-day, that is on September 17, 1861, the American Missionary Association established at Fortress Monroe the first day school for the ex-slaves. The work grew. Take, for example, our own Church. As early as the fall of 1861, the fleet under command of S. F. Dupont left Hampton Roads and moved down the Coast, capturing the defences of Port Royal, South Carolina, November 7, then Fernandina and St. Augustine, in Florida. In March, 1862, our Central Board of Missions, then located at Philadelphia, sent Rev. N. R. Johnston, an ardent friend of the slave, to explore the field on the South Atlantic Coast. He went to Beaufort, then to Port Royal, and remained till fall. Rev. Joshua Kennedy, aided by Rev. Robert Shields, labored in Fernandina the following winter, and Rev. Thomas M. Elder joined the workers in 1863. The Church under the superintendency of Rev. Dr. J. S. T. Milligan, but lately deceased, erected buildings in Washington, D. C., and a school was opened there in April, 1864, and was not discontinued till 1870. In the West, Rev. James Wallace was the pioneer, going to Little Rock in November, 1863, then to Natchez in January, 1864. Rev. J. C. K. Faris and Mrs. Faris, Rev. D. C. and Isaiah Faris, Rev. J. O. Bayles and wife were engaged in this Natchez mission in 1864. Many took up this work as the way opened. The work at Selma dates from 1874. Other churches carried on this work throughout the South, keeping up with the advancing armies. Thus the work enlarged for the emancipated slaves. All along under such leaders as J. L. M. Curry, whose body rests in Holly-

wood Cemetery, in Richmond, the work of Education for all the people made progress. "About the year 1870, public school systems were established in all the Southern States. The first report of enrollment, however, was for the year 1876-1877, when 1,827,139 white children and 571,506 colored children were reported as enrolled in the sixteen former Slave States and the District of Columbia. During the year 1908-1909, in the sixteen former Slave States and the District of Columbia, 1,712,137 colored children were enrolled in the public schools. This is 56.34 of the colored population of these States, which is estimated to be 3,038,710. The number of colored public school teachers in these States is 30,334.* "It is estimated that at the close of the Civil War less than 5 per cent. of the Freedmen could read and write. In 1900, 55.5 per cent. could both read and write, and in 1910, 69.5 per cent.** "There are more than 540 institutions devoted to the secondary and higher training of the negro."* As to property, "reports show that in 1911 the value of property on which negroes paid taxes was: in Arkansas, \$20,500,000; in Georgia, \$32,234,437; in North Carolina, \$28,600,000; in Virginia, \$27,000,000, and in Texas, \$30,000,000,"† and so on, with an estimate for the whole country of \$600,000,000.

From the first, however, the suffrage of the negroes was resented, and when the political rights of the Confederates were restored, and the elections resulted in Democratic success, there was a change. "From 1877 to 1890 the negroes in the Southern States were disfranchised largely by election devices, practices and intimidation." "Beginning with 1890 the Southern States have by the adoption of Constitutional Amendments sought to restrict negro suffrage,"‡ in this order: Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia and Oklahoma. "The Grandfather clause permits a person who is not able to satisfy either the educational or property tests to continue a voter for life if he was a voter in 1867 (or in Oklahoma if in 1866), or is an old soldier or the lineal descendant of such voter or soldier, pro-

*Negro Year Book, Prof. Monroe N. Work, Tuskegee, 1912, pp. 110-111; †page 23; ‡page 67.

vided, except in Oklahoma, he register prior to a fixed date." The Oklahoma Grandfather clause is permanent.* "Mississippi has no Grandfather clause."* These efforts were successful. The results are stated briefly in an editorial of the Richmond, Va., *News-Leader* of July 10 of this year, called out by a proposition now to cater to the negro vote for the Democratic ticket. It is headed, *No Retrogression*, and says:

"The Republican party in the South has for years been striving—or pretending to strive—to shake off this body of death, that it might be known as a white man's party. De we propose voluntarily to relieve that party of the burden of the negro vote, and not only submit on compulsion, and only so far as we must, to what for nearly 50 years we have stigmatized, and justly stigmatized, as the infamous crime of negro suffrage? . . . The Fifteenth Amendment has long been recognized by all the world as the most cruel folly perpetrated by our Northern conquerors. This proclaimed the doctrine of racial political equality and gave the negro the right to vote. We were powerless to resist it directly, but we never ceased to deny it, and all the world, headed by the Supreme Court of the United States, has now acquiesced in our substantial nullification of it."

We turn from this party to the Republican. Mr. Chase was the radical member of Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. He finally retired from it, and sought the Presidency in 1864 in his ambition and zeal. Yet when Mr. Taney died, that radical Pro-Slavery judge, whom Jackson had appointed, Mr. Lincoln named Mr. Chase for the vacant place, in his concern for the emancipated slaves. But in these latter days, Republican Presidents have named Southern Democrats for United States Judgeships, and the present Chief Magistrate appointed an ex-Confederate soldier to the Chief Justiceship of the highest Court.

There is a new party. But this, the Progressive party, eliminates the negro from the political meeting—that is in the South, and commits Progressive politics to the management of "the white men of the South." The militant and advancing cause

*Negro Year Book, pages 68-69.

of Woman Suffrage is espoused by this party and representatives of this cause were welcomed to the Convention at Chicago. Though linked to men by the closest earthly ties, women are to vote at the polls and in the Conventions. This is for their protection. Not so black people—in the South, neither men nor women. They are not given any assurance in any of the so-called platforms.

But let us look back, that we may look forward! In 1851, Iowa prohibited the immigration of negroes. In Illinois it was long a misdemeanor for a negro to come into the State with the intention of residing there. Indiana, in 1851, passed a law prohibiting free negroes and mulattoes from coming into the State. In Ohio, negroes were required to give bond for good behavior, as a condition of residence. Though after the Revolutionary War free negroes were allowed to vote in every State except Georgia and South Carolina; yet between 1792 and 1838 Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia denied suffrage to negroes. New York and Tennessee had limited negro suffrage. Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin allowed negro suffrage. The remaining States prohibited it. The xvth Amendment made the provision general, that color or race should be no bar to suffrage. In the fall of 1913, in County and State gatherings throughout the country, the Jubilee year of Emancipation is to be celebrated and evidence shown of the progress the negro race has made.

In the summer of 1913, another semi-Centennial is to be celebrated. On the field of Gettysburg, Union and Confederate survivors will be gathered together. North and South are at one again. The struggle was between Americans, brethren. The Commanders on either side had been educated in the same school—on the Hudson. The early cry, "On to Richmond," was heard, but the Confederate forces held back the Union army for nigh four years. They met the valor and self-denial of the Southern troops. When Early's corps broke away from this besieged city and came up to the defences of Washington, after their retreat down the valley the haversacks of the poorly-clad sharpshooters who lay dead within their trenches were

opened and found to contain nothing but corn-meal! The contest was unequal. The South was overpowered, out-numbered and hemmed in, the coast blockaded. This inequality in numbers is set forth in figures in an exhibit on the wall of the Confederate Museum in their former Capital. This is the view held forth of the struggle; the right to withdraw was prevented by force. The *Grange Forum* of Michigan in its issue of May 15 gives an account of the Order, formed after the War, of the farmers of both sections of the country. It says: "The founders of the Grange were prominent Free Masons. Their connection with that Order gave their valuable experiences to be used by them in arranging the cohesive force which was to hold in a fraternal band the agricultural people of America. The terrible War of the Rebellion had just ended. The issue between the North and the South had been settled, not because the South was convinced of its error, but because of the overpowering numerical strength of the North."

What is lacking then? One may see by what has fallen out of the platforms of the political parties since the early days. There is wanting the moral view of events, a sense that God has dealt, is dealing with this nation, as a moral being; has chastened, will chasten it for certain causes which He judges and condemns. In the year 1863, in the throes of the War, the Senate of the United States passed a resolution requesting the President to appoint a day for Humiliation and Prayer, with this confession, "devoutly recognizing the supreme authority and just government of Almighty God in all the affairs of men and of nations, and sincerely believing that no people, however great in numbers and resources, or however strong in the justice of their cause, can prosper without His favor, and at the same time deploring the national offences which have provoked His righteous judgment." The President appointed the 30th of April as a National Fast.

Imagine such a resolution now, in the turmoil of to-day! Yet would any one question the propriety of it, or the call for it? He acknowledged "the duty of nations, as well as of men, to own their dependence on the over-ruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble

sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon." The burden of the War still rested on him 22 months later, when he was inaugurated for his second term, and said of the continuance of this trial:

"The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.' If we should suppose that American slavery is one of those offences, which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but, which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said: 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

There are contained in these words the following truths:

Nations, as do persons, offend God, and thereby become subjects of His wrath.

This wrath of God is revealed in the evils that He visits upon them.

These evils have a just relation to the aggravations of their offences.

These evils come in God's season, when the measure of their sin is filled up.

In all this, God manifests Himself as the righteous Ruler of the world.

These truths had been brought home by the Spirit of God to the heart of the President of the United States, in the bitter experience of four years of Civil War, owing to slavery, and the strong man bowed himself and said: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." And many bowed with him.

Not so the South. Yet in the early days, Vir-

ginia was more anti-slavery than the merchants of New England, who went down to the sea in traffic. George Washington freed his slaves in his last will and testament. Thomas Jefferson said he trembled for his country when he remembered God was just. In 1832, on January 17, George Bancroft wrote from Washington to his wife: "The Colonization Society had a famous meeting last night in the Hall of Representatives. . . . I heard with horror that the slave trade is still continued under as aggravated circumstances as ever, and that the infernal cupidity of the slave dealers still carries one hundred thousand negroes annually into foreign bondage. . . . Mr. (William S.) Archer of Virginia spoke last evening and at considerable length. From the tenor of his remarks, it is plain that the State which he represents is at least deeply sensible of the evils of slavery, and fearfully looks forward to an impending crisis. He described the condition of free blacks in the slave-holding States to be wretched in the extreme: cut off from all opportunity of successful exertion, and necessarily rendered vicious, because they are necessarily idle. But for my part, I shall not take, as far as the South is concerned, I shall not take a deep interest in their participation in forwarding colonization in Africa, unless they also take some steps, initiatory at least, to final emancipation. And of this there exists little hope, until the evil becomes far more intense than it now is."* And this from one who in the next decade entered the Cabinet of James K. Polk, and in the following decade was a Douglas Democrat until the War. Why, then, did not emancipation come, and not Civil War?

The time of his writing from Washington was in the days of Calhoun's famous manifestoes, the third being sent out on August 28, 1832, of which Professor Von Holst has said:

"Thirty years later the program laid down in it was carried out by the South piece by piece, and the justification of the Southern course was based, point by point, upon this argument."† In it, Cal-

*Life and Letters of George Bancroft. By M. A. De Wolfe Howe. 1908; vol. 1, pages 198-200.

†John C. Calhoun, by Dr. H. Von Holst, 1890, page 98.

houn asserts, that "so far from the Constitution being the work of the American people collectively, no such political body, either now or ever, did expect." Dr. Von Holst says of this statement: "The historical review by which he tried to prove this assertion contains two seemingly slight, but in fact very important, errors. The Colonies did not 'by name and enumeration' declare themselves free and independent States, nor is the Constitution declared 'to be binding between the States so ratifying,' but Article vii of the Constitution reads, 'The ratification of the Conventions of nine States shall be sufficient for the establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying.'"* What shaped Calhoun's view? Slavery. "Slavery is, in his opinion, not only a fact, but an immutable fact, because it is the direct outgrowth of the natural relation between the white and the black races."† In January, 1831, Mr. Garrison in Boston had begun *The Liberator*, on behalf of "immediate and unconditional emancipation." Then in December, 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society put forth its "Declaration of Principles." Again to quote Professor Von Holst: "No one understood so well as he (Mr. Calhoun), that the appearance of the abolitionists had laid the axe to the root of slavery, though they were but a handful of men and women, with neither fame, social position, office, money, nor the general approbation of the public mind to make them formidable adversaries; and therefore as yet no one fully understood how terribly in earnest he was, and how correctly he read the future, when he declared at every opportunity that the minority, that is the South, was doomed if State sovereignty was not recognized as the central pillar on which the dome of the Constitution rested."‡

Does it seem at all, as if in these latter days, there has come over the people generally the Southern view of events, overshadowing the moral cause of the War and its awful judgments, and leading to an acceptance of such estimates of our fellow-men as inevitably leads to injustice and oppression? Is it invading the Church, as the State, as aforetime? In vain, as already said, do we look to the great

*Von Holst, pages 98-99; †page 141; ‡page 122.

party platforms for any moral view. For what leader, then, can the surviving Radicals of 1856-1876 cast their votes, to fulfill the hopes and pledges of the early years, to help to make good the Constitutional provisions for men of every race?

Our Church, of course, has a Testimony that goes further than the pledges of any platform in witnessing for the recognition of God, of the Lord of Lords, of the Governor among the nations, because the Constitution itself—not solely the great party platforms—does not deal with questions in a moral light. As far as the two older parties are concerned the issue to be made prominent in their view in the present canvass is the Tariff, and the Democratic leader opened, last month, with an appeal to the farmers of Pennsylvania on this issue, the old-time issue of John Quincy Adams' term and onward till the moral question of human slavery was thrust upon the nation.

It is with nations as with persons, the great question is not how full is the Treasury, but what as to character? We have come at last, in this day, to know that the first question as to a man of wealth is not: Is he a millionaire, but what is his character? By character also nations stand or fall. To Babylon it was said: "The fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off, for the fear of her torment." Yet for all this, how general is oppression in the earth! Not one race, not only the people of dark skin suffer. Consider other races in other lands: Mexico, the country of the Amazon, Asia, Africa, Europe. Yet there is a reckoning, a just and exact reckoning, and there is no escape. Egypt of old was a great oppressor. God spoke of her by the prophet: "I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother and every one against his neighbor; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." Assyria was a great oppressor. Of her, it was said: "He will stretch out His hand against the North and destroy Assyria; and I will make Nineveh a desolation and dry like a wilderness." Babylon was a great oppressor. To her it

was said: "Thou shalt be brought down to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee and consider thee saying, 'Is this the man that made the earth to tremble that did shake kingdoms; that opened not the house of his prisoners?'"

We may well conclude with the words that came home to the martyred Chief Magistrate, whose portrait is not only seen in the White House at Washington, the nation's Capital, but also in Montgomery, the Cradle of the Confederacy. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" This he knew applied to the nation, as also this instruction: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"