## EX-SLAVES DREAM OF A MODEL NEGRO COLONY COMES TRUE

Mound Bayou, Mississippi, in the Heart of the Fertile "Delta" Is a Community of 8,000 Where No White Man Can Own a Square Foot of Property.

By Thomas H. Arnold.

HE story of Mound Bayou, Miss., reads like a romance, and yet it is the simple truth of the wonsturar set of negroes, who, while they are the possession of which they will never ambitious, have no thought or hope of be disturbed. putting themselves in competition with In the midst of this district of negro plication and example.

ever endured in the days "befol de principles, and where, at least, 90 per

that it would well pay the negroes throughout the United States to study and profit by. It is a lesson of how they may become prosperous and selfreliant, of how they may build for their posterity in a way that will bring forth the blessings of those who are to come after them.

To segregate the negro from the white race and yet have him prosperous and contented has been, heretofore, a problem that was considered incapable of solution, but Mound Bayou is a living contradiction of the assertion and a revelation in that line of undertaking.

Other similar colonies are in process of incubation, and before another quarter-century has rolled around I predict that they will have blossomed into full being, and that many of the negroes who are leading an idle and humiliating existence in the "negro quarters" of our cities, heeding the call of "back to the farm." will join the throng that is now singing the praises of old Isaiah Mont-

have their necks from the day they stick a plow into the ground until they come derful work accomplished by a to occupy the only six feet of earth about

the white man as an economic or social farmers lies the village of Mound Bafactor, who claim that there is much you, quite picturesque and surely a that is good in their people, that can be unique proposition in the history of town brought out and developed by proper ap- building in this great country. If one had said to me a few years ago that it They have come up from a race of ex- were possible or practical for the negro slaves, but under the leadership of old to segregate himself and without the Isaiah Montgomery they have planned aid of the white man and his advice and and builded so that the last vestige of means to build up a community of his the environment of slavery is a thing of own race exclusively that should be a the past with them, even to that "free complete credit to himself, his State and slavery" that is yet so prevalent in the his people, a community where crime plantation life of the South-the system and criminals are not tolerated, where of "share-cropping," which they realize law is enforced along legal lines, where is a species of bondage worse than was business is conducted on strict business cent. of the heads of families own their

tem" in the yoke of which their less for- fathers not for centuries braved the how hard they work or how moral they tunate brothers who work for the great miasma and hewn down forests at the may be. The girls become prostitutes and plantation owners as "share croppers" command of your masters? Can you not the boys gamblers or viscious idlers at





U. S. Agricultural Department Agent Lecturing to Crowd in Front of the Bank of Mound Bayou.

the age when the white children are in cial institution, clearing with the best school, through the idea that they are banks of New York and the East. does count."

stock, is six feet in height, broad in build, and decidedly athletic. To listen to him

only niggers,' and that what they do or | Every official of Mound Bayou is a what they say don't count for anything, negro, and even the white Sheriff of We are trying here to saturate them Bolivar County does not intrude officialwith a realization of the fact that the ly on the colony, but appoints a colored thrifty, intelligent, well-behaved negro deputy to represent him in that district. But there is little use for officers Charles Banks is of the pure African in this colony of black people. It is almost a proverb with them that the Deputy Sheriff and the constable are the

only idle men in town. That's wonderful, isn't it, in a town of negroes? But the condition is perhaps best explained in the language of old Isaiah Montgomery, who said:

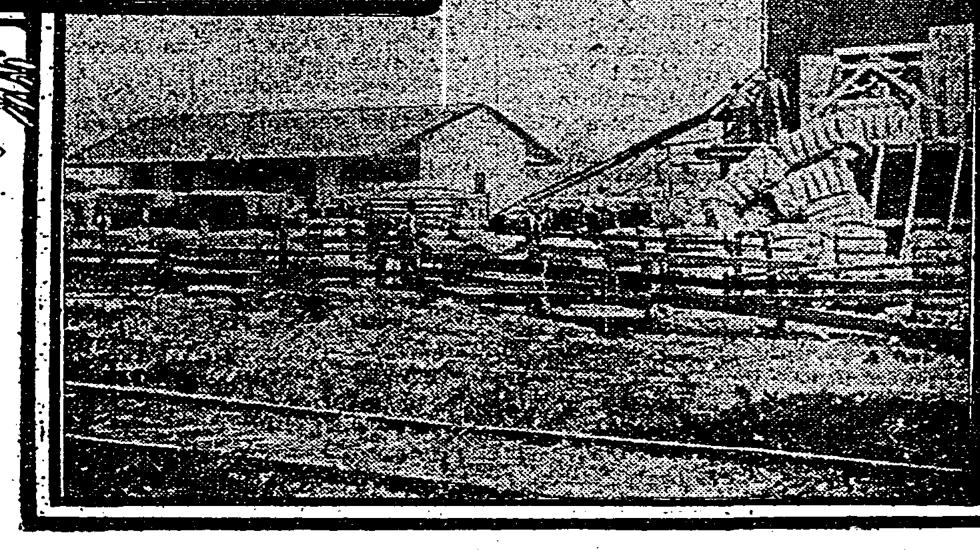
"Our people, both educated and illiterate, are behind the laws we make. They know that every law is the sentiment of the community, and that it is people of the country know just what we are doing and if harm threatened, the white Sheriff of Bolivar County could get enough deputies from among the best every way."

And the best white people, including statement to the fullest extent.

As an example of how their affairs are regulated and the respect they have for law and order may be cited an incident that occurred in 1905. A citizenship meeting was called, for it had been l discovered that several "blind tigers" were being operated in the village. The matter was thoroughly discussed the sentiment emphatically expressed that this character of lawlessness would not be tolerated, and the "blind then and there ceased to exist.

It was not many years ago that the strenuous effort to abolish local option in tirely by whites, and in which negroes Bolivar County, and the whisky element ment hung on a half dozen franchised voters of Mound Bayou. They immeately set to work to endeavor to corthe knowledge of the colony, a citizens' voters were reprimanded in a stern but kindly way. It was reasoned that saloons and rum shops in the county, even though they were absent from the colony, might demoralize some of the members of the colony and result disastrously. Accordingly the village delegates were instructed to cast their ballots with the prohibition party of the or renting it on a crop-sharing contract. county, and that saved the day in Bolivar for prohibition.

equality. But such is far from the case,



would be compelled to remain over night which the people may well be proud. The in Mound Bayou I began to wonder what Green Grove Missionary Baptist Church their law and stands for their good. No treatment we, the only two white people has a membership of 600, and the house lawless influences from the outside can in the place, would receive. I asked of worship has a seating capacity of harm us, for the better class of white Montgomery about some place to eat and 1,000, and the church maintains a monthly sleep, and he replied that there was a publication, The Baptist Echo. Then there room at his home that had never been is the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal occupied excepting by white people. To Church, the Christian Church, the Jerusahis house my companion and myself were lem Baptist Church, and others of various people of Mississippi to protect us in taken. We were met in the hall by Mont-denominations. As a rule the services are gomery's wife and two daughters, neatly well attended and ably conducted. dressed and with a manner and refinethe Sheriff, afterward confirmed the ment that were a revelation. They had Bayou, the methods of administration, prepared for us a savory supper, which the scope of the curriculum, and, in short, we ate with much relish in the regular the entire operation of the school system dining room all by ourselves.

"Our bedroom was neat, clean, and as nicely furnished as you will find in the average hotel. After some conversation with Montgomery concerning his colony and the general condition of the negro farmers of Mississippi we retired to our years of its pre-eminent usefulness. It room. The thought occurred to us, while carries an enrollment of 200 pupils, and position of two negroes who might credit to their race. local option party of Mississippi made a have strayed into a town populated enwere not permitted to live. Here we were a most thoroughly conducted and highly ascertained that the success of the move- at Mound Bayou-two white men-among creditable institution. Besides these two 7,000 negroes, and our treatment had been irreproachable."

Because he is economically and indusrupt these voters. This move came to triously free, the negro of Mound Bayou is successful. The system of crop-sharing. meeting was called, and the suspected or, as it is designated in the South, "share-cropping," is a thing that the colonist scares at and he avoids it as he would a pestilence. He buys his land interested in his success and upbuilding, at a low price and a low rate of interest. rather than buying from a white man at a high price and ruinous rate of interest, As one writer has put it, share-cropping is the Southern planters' joke-at the It might be supposed that the white Fifteenth Amendment. It is the means of visitor to a community composed entirely keeping the negro in eternal servitude on The demand for cottonseed oil, cottonseed of blacks would be expected to put him-the plantations. The planter furnishes the self on a plane with them, and if he land, a little "box house" to exist in, a sought their hospitality he must break mule, and a plow, for a rental of onebread with them on terms of perfect half the crop. All of the provisions the tenant gets must, in most cases, be purchased from the plantation commissary, at Why should we not reap the benefits of night in Mound Bayou he finds that cer-prices from 25 to 40 per cent. higher than tain rooms in the hotel are reserved ex- they could be purchased in the ordinary Banks, as I have said, is also cashier clusively for white visitors. They are way, and in addition the share-cropper in, and the time for settlement comes.

> The negro colonist of Mound Bayou is a stranger to such conditions. If he does not own his land he rents it from a hauled to the gins of the colony, it is stored in the warehouse there, and it is sold in the market of Mound Bayou at the best market price. He buys his provisions, his fertilizer, and his livestock | in the town and gets his lumber and building material from the Mound Bayou lumber yard. If he needs ready money our schools, colleges, and churches imhe gets it at a legal rate of interest from the Bank of Mound Bayou, which is able streets are drained and paved, our oil and readily does finance every institution of the place. His medicine is gotten from antiquated characteristic Delta pump is a Mound Bayou doctor, and his teeth are displaced by bountiful streams of pure looked after by a Mound Bayou dentist, artesian water, negroes will begin to make and when the end comes he is laid away they are engaged in business or make by a Mound Bayou undertaker.

> It can thus be seen that the negro of an atmosphere in which to raise their this colony contributes to his own wel- children and a social status for their fare by contributing to the welfare of wives and daughters very much to their his race and of his own town. Every dol- liking. lar that is earned or made is kept at "There are those who ask, 'Are you home and the profits of all transactions not afraid that some day the whites will go to their own prosperity and upbuilding be moved to wipe out Mound Bayou by as a community. Through this principle violence? of spending what they get from the soil "Knowing the controlling forces among among themselves the community of the whites as I do in this section, gath-Mound Bayou is in a thriving and happy ered by, a stay of thirty-three years condition. There are about fifty stores among them, I say no, we are not afraid. in the village, and the business of the The negroes who shape and control the shops and cotton industries puts about destiny of Mound Bayou understand con-\$600,000 annually into circulation. The ditions too well to allow any radical, nonchief industrial enterprises are an oil sensical and indiscreet policy to prevail mill, four cotton gins, a sawmill, and a here, on the one hand, and there are too lumber yard that exports staves, lum- many white men around us or in easy; ber, and ties.

> worship and for education Mound Bayou way or undue advantage is taken of us stands second to no community of its size by irresponsible parties on the other. in the South. Here all the principal church This has been demonstrated on several denominations are represented, the con-loccasions. Verily, the future holds much

"When I realized," he said, "that we; the houses of worship being structures of

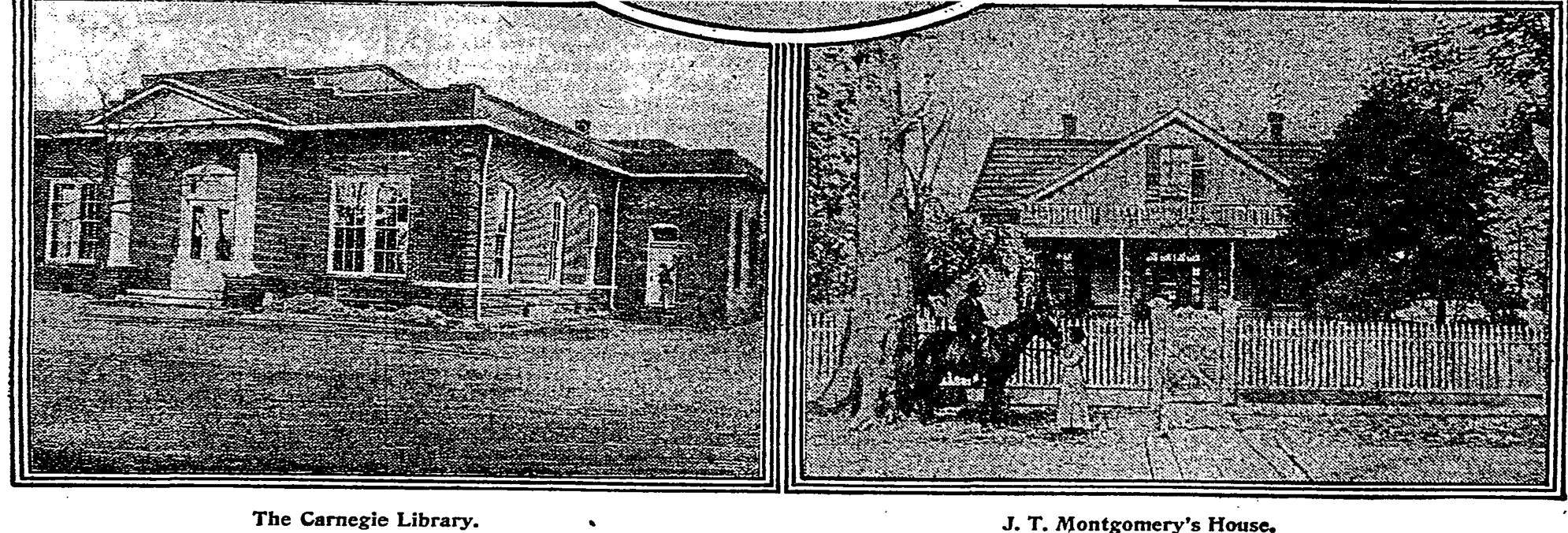
The character of the schools of Mound must command admiration. The Mound Bayou Normal and Industrial Institute is an especial point of congratulation to the people. They point with pride to good work it has done and the splendid progress it has achieved during the sixteen from it have passed many young men and women who have proved in every way a

The Baptist College carries an enrollment also of about 200 students and is institutions there is a public school that is as admirably and successfully conducted as any of the public schools of the State, and which also has an enrollment of over 200 pupils. With such an array of scholastic facilities who can dispute the assertion that the negro citizens of Mound Bayou are seekers for knowledge and earnest workers in the field of race enlightenment and race upbuilding? Sitting there, contemplating all of the wonderful things that have been accomplished and are being accomplished by this people. I could but wonder if the structure they had reared and were maintaining would stand, or if, with the passing of the generation that is directing the great work, it would crumble and pass to decay: and so I asked Charles Banks the question: "What of the future of Mound Bayou?" to which he replied:

"What Mound Bayou is now and what

it has already accomplished is largely prophetic of its future. Situated in the great alluvial Delta district, lands whose productive qualities are not surpassed by any known to civilization, timbered by hardwood that finds ready sale at fabulous prices, her natural advantages are admirable indeed. No part of this great section has yet reached its full deling towns dotted here and there throughworks, electric lights and other modern improvements, have reached their present stage with the Delta only partially developed. What may we expect when practically all the lands have been cleared, properly drained and tilled and a full supply of contented and efficient labor everywhere to do the work desired? "In proportion as the whole Delta approaches these conditions. Mound Bayou will progress also. There is another distinction that is more than likely to come to Mound Bayou: As the years go by and prove in power and capacity, as our lamps replaced by electric lights, the old, this their resident home, even though their livelihood elsewhere; there will be

reach who are our friends and willing to In the matter of facilities for religious see that no impediment is thrown in our gregations being strong numerically and in store for Mound Bayou."



The Carnegie Library.

A Typical Residence in the Town. (Picture Above.)

Bayou. STUDY in black and white-princi-South," with the people black and the

houses white. Such is the town of Mound Bayou. sit-Bolivar County, Miss., a town white man can own a foot of invest a dollar in its improvements or enterprises, nor till any of the 40,000 acres of rich delta soil that goes to

make up the "Colony of Mound Bayou." With the bare exception of \$10,000 put into a library building for the benefit. enlightenment, and advancement of the who will come after them, by Andrew

time African race into whose veins has Bayou." of that shiftlessness, i criminal tendencies, that characterizes many of the race who have grown to out to a most successful degree. One

ing and of crime. ment of the "colony." It may have ex- | gro found in our city communities, the strapped under their arms, said: isted to a certain extent in the pioneer | Mound Bayou citizens frankly admit that days of the place, when Isaiah Montstarted the undertaking that has result- of complications in their every day ased in a monument to them that will be as sociation with white people, and that

Delta country, where the soil is as rich men of the colony refer to each other as as the proverbial cream-more fertile | negroes, and to their race as the negro than the famed Valley of the Nile or race. the most lauded granaries of the Old Isaiah Montgomery is proud of what he World on the line of the Yazoo & Mis- has accomplished in this race building. sissippi Valley Railroad, is situated And yet he has lived in a romantic pe-Mound Bayou. Leaving New Orleans the riod, a period whose cycles of success train speeds on, passing the Louisiana would have turned the head of many a State line and rushing northward through less well-balanced man, even those with the counties of Wilkinson, Franklin, Jef- white skins. He was born a slave, on a ferson, Claiborne, Warren, Sharkey, and plantation that was the home of a broth-Washington, with the huge levees tower- er of Jefferson Davis. Like every other ing on the left to prevent the Spring slave he had nothing scarcely that he freshets from devastating the great could call his own when the war libstretch of jet black alluvial lands with erated him, but to-day his wealth is vathe floods from the mighty "Father of i riously estimated at from \$75,000 to \$100,-Waters." and then Bolivar County is 000. reached—the garden county of all that! But between that eventful day and this wonderful "American Valley of the there has been a world of interesting

As tes train draws near the Mound of with an evident and surely pardonable Bayou the traveler notices that the broad pride. He delights in recalling the days plantations, with their palatial homes and of his first experiences with the colonists dotted in greatest profusion with newly and in recounting some of the difficulties whitewashed tenant cabins and cotton he encountered in cheering them on in houses, and through miles and miles of their herculean task of transforming the whose cotton fields the train speeds as wilderness into the productive, happy, a great vessel might cleave the waves prosperous home place that it is to-day. of the ocean, have disappeared. They are He gladly and interestingly tells the story conspicuous by their absence here, and in to those who are interested listeners, and their places are found innumerable small elaborates his narrative, if urged on the holdings, each worked by a separate ne- least, with extracts of the speech he gro owner or negro tenant, and in place made to the first colonists as they stepped of the great white plantation houses are from the train and faced the great battle the low, squatty houses of these independ- that was before them. ent tillers of the soil, who know no task- Pointing to the great stretch of forest masters and who are not held in eternal he said: "Why fear the difficulties that servitude by the demon "furnishing sys- are orfore you? Have you and your fore-

There are ways, many of them, in and develop under their own vine and fig It was Banks who first advocated bewhich this people could assume to put tree?" "The Black Metropolis of the themselves on a plane of equality, if them make visits now and then a matter of necessity. But they do not avail them- of The Demonstrator, the newspaper of which efforts resulted in the establishing selves of the opportunities.

is struck with his rugged honesty and a capital of \$10,000, but which has only an opportunity to invest his savings in his unassuming frankness. You can't help recently been increased to \$25,000. liking him, although his skin and his hair mark him as one of the fast disappearing type of "befoh-de-wah" darkies. The people of Mound Bayou call him the Carnegie, no man of white blood has a Hon. Isaiah Montgomery, and he has well dollar in the colony nor in the property won the title, for his record stands as one of honor among them, with never a tar-It is a town founded by negroes, built nish nor a semblance of a stain. And as up by negroes, managed by negroes, all a talented writer has before expressed it. of whom are descendants of the real old- he is "The Father Abraham of Mound

His controlling idea, as well as the idea of all the principal citizens of the place, so is race building. They are carrying it be such a fester upon the average city, of their chief characteristics is the enand who live upon the proceeds of thiev- | tire frankness and complacency which they regard the fact that they are That kind of blood has never found per- black men, and that they are in reality they have no thought of trying to put Benjamin Green, two ex- themselves on a plane with the whites. blazed their way through the They have none of that assumption, that In the very heart of the wonderful difficult of solution. Even the leading

Nile." of which Rosedale is the county events, a wealth of race and stamina building history, that he turns the page

come after you, that they may worship bred American.

creditable publication with an ever-pres- lent ent determination to better and build up this people and their community. In his mind and in his utterances there lurks no suspicion of smothered shame of his race. He not only admits his race, but he is and is constantly, though perhaps unconsciously, manifesting his pride in the strides that have been made and the sta-

being builded. When a certain writer recently ex- its by-products?" pressed a doubt as to the future of the colony after the present generation of its

counts, I should have justily pooh-poohed selves and for your children that are to one would imagine him to be a college-

Two other examples of the stamina, in- ness Men's League of Mississippi ideas telligence, and reliability that are predom- that would broaden the racial activities inating characteristics of the Moundland encourage the business and mechan-Bayou negroes are J. W. Covington, editor ical development of the negro people, and the colony, and Charles Banks, cashier of a cottonseed oil mill at Mound Bayou. As one sits and talks to Isaiah Mont- of the Bank of Mound Bayou, a financial The stock was placed at \$4 a share so Covington is a man of more than ordi- established and will be a success. Banks

> try." he said. "because our people are cotton raisers: they have made most of what they have from handling cotton. cotton now: we sell it through our own bility with which the social structure is cotton men; we finance our own crops.

thing and to despise their race, no matter embarrassed, and is a regular commer- colony.

gomery, "The Father Abraham of Mound 1 own properties or have snug bank ac-1 perform the same heroic duty for your-1 talk without being able to see the speaker

"We selected the cottonseed oil indus-

founders have passed away, the editor through his energies that it was organ- far in advance of what is found in the when the season is over the crop turned took him to a window, and, pointing to a lized and through his efforts mainly it has average country hotel, and instead of begroup of school children that was going been built up to the stable institution that ing asked to eat at the table, or even in is rare, indeed, that the tenant winds up velopment; the beautiful, thriving, husthome, tidily clad and with books neatly it is. It has deposits of upward of \$50.- the same dining room with the colored a season without finding that a large 000, and has on a single day transacted boarders, the white sojourner's meals are debt is hanging over him to be carried to out the Delta, with their factories, water-"Do you think that our boys and girls more than \$22,000 of business. It handles served in his own room in a most apper the next season. can go to and from the well regulated without difficulty the cotton, lumber, tizing manner. schools every day and not realize the and various other industries of the comgreat benefits that come to them from munity, and in the financial flurry two a pretty, cheerful room is set aside in the wilderness of Bolivar County and false pride that leads to a great majority the industry and thrift that they see years ago continued specie payment home of Isalah Montgomery, the hospiabout them? What chance has the negro | when many of the strongest white banks | tality accorded being probably best exboy or negro girl who lives in the 'nigger of the State had to resort to cashier's pressed in the language of a Memphis quarters' of the cities? They soon learn | certificates. It stands A1 in Dun's and | newspaper writer, who was one of the to think they can never amount to any- Bradstreet's, has never been in the least first white men to spend a night in the

Cotton-Gin.

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