

to be the home of one nation, and one only. That the lands which lie east of this region between the Alleghanies and the Atlantic, and those which lie west of it between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific, are also occupied by that one nation is due to the fact that before the colonization of the central region had gone far, means of communication were invented which made the Alleghanies cease to be a barrier, and that before the Pacific coast had been thickly settled, the rest of the country was already so great in population, wealth, and power that its attraction was as irresistible as the moon finds the attraction of the earth to be.

Severing its home by a wide ocean from the old world of Europe on the east, and by a still wider one from the half old, half new, world of Asia and Australasia on the west, she has made the nation sovereign of its own fortunes. It need fear no attacks nor even any pressure from the military and naval powers of the eastern hemisphere, and it has little temptation to dissipate its strength in contests with them. It has no doubt a strong neighbour on the North, but a friendly one, linked by many ties of interest as well as kindred, and not likely ever to become threatening. It had on the South neighbours who might have been dangerous, but fortune favoured it by making one of them hopelessly weak, and obliging the other, strong as she was, to quit possession at a critical moment. Thus is it left to itself as no great State has ever yet been in the world; thus its citizens enjoy an opportunity never before granted to a nation, of making their country what they will to have it.

These are unequalled advantages. They contain the elements of immense defensive strength, of immense material prosperity. They disclose an unrivalled field for the development of an industrial civilization. Nevertheless, students of history, knowing how unpredictable is the action of what we call moral causes, that is to say, of emotional and intellectual influences as contrasted with those rooted in physical and economic facts, will not venture to base upon the most careful survey of the physical conditions of America any bolder prophecy than this, that not only will the State be powerful and the wealth of its citizens prodigious, but that the Nation will probably remain one in its government, and still more probably one in speech, in character, and in ideas.

## CHAPTER XCII

### THE SOUTH SINCE THE WAR

THOUGH in the preceding chapters I have sought, so far as possible, to describe the political phenomena of America in general terms, applicable to all parts of the Union, it has often been necessary to remind the reader that the conditions of the Southern States, both political and social, are in some respects exceptional, one may almost say, abnormal. The experience of this section of the country has been different from that of the more populous and prosperous North, for the type of its civilization was till thirty years ago determined by the existence of slavery. It has suffered, and has been regenerated, by a terrible war. It is still confronted by a peculiar and menacing problem in the presence of a mass of negroes much larger than was the whole population of the Union in A. D. 1800, persons who, though they are legally and industrially members of the nation, are still virtually an alien element, unabsorbed and unabsorbable. In the present chapter I propose to sketch in brief outline the fortunes of the Southern States since the war, and their present economic and social condition, reserving for the chapter which follows an equally succinct account of the state of the coloured population, and their relations, present and prospective, to the whites.

The history and the industrial situation of the Southern States cannot be understood without a comprehension of their physical conditions. That part of them which lies east of the Mississippi consists of two regions. There is what may be called the plantation country, a comparatively level, low, and fertile region, lying along the coast of the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and stretching up the basin of the Mississippi River. And there is the highland region, a long, broad tongue of elevated land stretching down from the north into this level

plantation country, between the 39th and the 33d parallels of north latitude. Although the mountain country encloses within its network of parallel ridges many fertile valleys, while upon its outer slopes, where they sink to the plain, there is plenty of good land, the greater part of its area is covered by thick forests, or is too steep and rough for tillage. To men with capital and to the better sort of settlers generally, it was uninviting, and thus while the rest of the South was being occupied and brought under cultivation, it long remained thinly peopled and in many districts quite wild, with scarcely any roads and no railways. As the soil was not fit for tobacco, cotton, rice, or sugar, the planters had no motive to bring slave labour into it, not to add that the winter cold made it no fit dwelling place for the swarthy children of the tropics. Hence this region was left to be slowly and sparsely peopled by the poorest of the whites, and a race of small farmers and woodmen grew up. They were rude and illiterate, cut off from the movements of the world, and having little in common with the inhabitants of the low country east and west of them, yet hardy and vigorous, with the virtues, and some of the fierceness, of simple mountaineers, honest among themselves, and with a dangerously keen sense of personal honour, but hostile to the law and its ministers. While the whole cultivation of the plain country of Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky was done by negroes, and these States, more particularly Virginia and the Carolinas, were ruled by an oligarchy of wealthy planters, negroes were scarcely to be seen in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, Western Virginia, North Carolina, and Eastern Tennessee, and the scanty white population of these mountains had no influence on the conduct of public affairs. Hence when the Civil War broke out, this race of hillmen, disliking slavery, and having no love for the planters, adhered to the Union cause, and sent thousands of stalwart recruits into the Union armies. Even to-day, though, as we shall presently see, it has been much affected by the running of railways through it, the opening of mines and the setting up of iron works, the mountain land of the South remains unlike the plain country both in the character of its inhabitants and in the physical conditions which have created that character, conditions which, as will appear in the se-

quel, are an important factor in the so-called Negro Problem.

Excluding these highlanders, — and excluding also the three Border States which did not secede, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri, — there were at the end of the war three classes of persons in the South. There was the planting aristocracy, which the war had ruined. The elder men had seen their estates laid waste, such savings as they possessed exhausted, their whole negro property, estimated (over the whole country), at nearly \$2,000,000, gone from them into freedom. Of the younger men, a large part had fallen in the field. All, old and young, had no capital left with which to work the estates that still remained in their hands. Land and negroes had been their only wealth, for there were practically no manufactures and little commerce, save at the half dozen seaports. Credit was gone; and everything, even the railroads, was in ruins. Thus the country was, as a whole, reduced to poverty, and the old plantation life broken up for ever.

The second class consisted of the poor or, as they were often called, "mean" whites, who, in the lowlands and outside the few cities, included all the white population below the level of the planters. On them, too, slavery had left its hateful stamp. Considering themselves above field labour, which in any case they could hardly have undertaken in the hot regions along the Atlantic and the Gulf coasts, they contracted habits of idleness and unthrift; they were uneducated, shiftless, unenterprising, and picked up their living partly by a languid cultivation of patches of land, and by hunting, partly by hanging about the plantations in a dependent condition, doing odd jobs and receiving occasional aid. To them the war brought good, for not only was labour dignified by the extinction of slavery, but their three or four years of service in the Confederate armies called out their finer qualities and left them more of men than it found them. Moreover with the depression of the planting oligarchy their social inferiority and political subservience became less marked.

The third class were the negroes, then about four millions in number, whose sudden liberation threw a host of difficulties upon the States where they lived, and upon the Federal government, which felt responsible not only for the good order of

the reconquered South, but in a special manner for those whose freedom its action had procured. They were — even the majority of the (comparatively few) free blacks in the towns — illiterate, and scarcely more fit to fend for themselves and guide their course as free citizens than when they or their fathers had been landed from the slave ship.

In this state of things, three great problems presented themselves to the Federal government whose victorious armies were occupying the South. How should the State governments in the States that had seceded and been conquered be re-established? What provision should be made for the material support and protection in personal freedom of the emancipated slaves? To what extent should not merely passive but also active civil rights — that is to say, rights of participating in the government as electors or officials — be granted to these freedmen?

The solution of these problems occupied twelve eventful years from 1865 to 1877, and constitutes one of the most intricate chapters in American history. I must refrain from discussing either the party conflicts at Washington, or the subtle legal questions that were raised in Congress and in the courts, and be content with touching on the action taken by the Federal and State governments so far and only so far as it affected the relations of the negroes and the whites.

The first action was taken by the Southern States themselves. Conformably to his amnesty proclamation of 1863, President Lincoln had recognized new State governments, loyal to the Union, in Tennessee and Louisiana, as he had previously done in Arkansas. When the war had ended, the other reconquered States (except Texas) took a course similar to that which the loyalists of those States had taken. The white inhabitants, except those excluded by the terms of President Johnson's amnesty proclamation of May, 1865, chose conventions: these conventions enacted new constitutions: and under these constitutions, new State legislatures were elected. These legislatures promptly accepted the amendment (the thirteenth) to the Federal Constitution by which (in 1865) slavery was abolished, and then went on to pass laws for the regulation of negro labour and against vagrancy, laws which, though represented, and probably in good faith, as necessary for the control of a mass of ignorant beings suddenly turned adrift, with no one

to control them and no habits of voluntary industry or thrift, kept the negroes in a state of inferiority, and might have been so worked as to reduce a large part of them to practical servitude. This was a false move, for it excited alarm and resentment at the North; and it was accompanied by conflicts here and there between the whites, especially the disbanded Confederate soldiers, and the coloured people; conflicts the more regrettable, because the slaves had, during the war, behaved excellently towards the defenceless white women and children on the plantations, and had given their former masters little or nothing to revenge. It was, therefore, in a suspicious temper that Congress approached the question of the resettlement of the South. The victors had shown unexampled clemency to the vanquished, but they were not prepared to kiss and be friends in the sense of at once readmitting those whom they deemed and called "rebels" to their old full constitutional rights. Slavery, which at the beginning of the war they had for the most part disclaimed the purpose to abolish, had now become utterly detestable to them, and the negro an object of special sympathy. They felt bound to secure for him, after all they had done and suffered, the amplest protection. It might perhaps have been wiser to revert to the general maxims of American statesmanship, and rely upon the natural recuperative forces and the interest which the South itself had in re-establishing order and just government. But the Northern leaders could not be expected to realize how completely the idea of another revolt had vanished from the minds of the Southern people, who, in a characteristically American fashion, had already accepted the inevitable, perceiving that both slavery and the legal claim to secede were gone for ever. And these leaders — more particularly those who sat in Congress — were goaded into more drastic measures than reflection might have approved by the headstrong violence of President Andrew Johnson, who, as a Southern States Rights man of the old type, had announced that the States were entitled to resume their former full rights of self-government, and who, while stretching his powers to effect this object, had been denouncing Congress in unmeasured terms. Very different might have been the course of events had the patient wisdom of Lincoln lived to guide the process of resettlement.

Under the influence of these sentiments, Congress refused to allow the members elected from the reconquered States to take their seats, and enacted a statute establishing a Freedmen's Bureau, armed with large powers for the oversight and support of the liberated negroes. Passed in 1865, and in 1866 continued for two years longer, this Act practically superseded the legislation of the reconquered States regarding the coloured people. Congress then passed and proposed for acceptance by the States (June, 1866) an amendment (the fourteenth) to the Federal Constitution, which conferred citizenship, State as well as Federal, on all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, forbade legislation by a State abridging the privileges or immunities of a citizen of the United States, and provided for reducing the representation in Congress of any State in proportion to the number of its citizens excluded from the suffrage. As all danger of a return of slavery had already vanished, it was a tremendous forward move to put this pressure upon the Southern States to confer full voting rights upon their negroes. These States, however, would probably have done well to accept the amendment, and might perhaps have accepted it had they realized what was the temper of the party dominant at the North. But they complained of the proposal to cut down representation in respect of excluded citizens, arguing that there were Northern States where colour was a ground of exclusion, and which, nevertheless, would suffer much less than the Southern States because the number of their coloured residents was far smaller; and they also resented a provision in the amendment which disqualified from voting or office all persons who having ever taken an oath to support the Constitution of the United States had been concerned in "insurrection or rebellion against the same." Accordingly all these States, except Tennessee, rejected the amendment. This further stimulated the anger and suspicion of Congress, which proceeded (March 2, 1867) to pass the so-called Reconstruction Act (a bill "to provide efficient governments for the insurrectionary States") designed to create legitimate governments in the States not yet readmitted to the Union (ignoring the governments set up by the white inhabitants), and to determine the conditions proper for their readmission. By this

Act these States, that is, the whole seceding South except Tennessee, were divided into five military districts, each to be governed by a brigadier-general of the Federal army, until such time as a State convention should have framed a new constitution, the Fourteenth Amendment have been ratified and the State have been duly readmitted. The delegates to each convention were to be elected by all the male citizens, excluding such as, having previously sworn to support the Federal Constitution, had been concerned in the late rebellion; and it was to these same voters that the new Constitution when framed was to be submitted for ratification. This provision, while it admitted the negroes to be voters and delegates to the conventions, debarred from both functions most of the leading whites, and left the conventions to be "run" by those few whites who had remained faithful to the Union, and by adventurers who had come from the North in the track of the Federal armies. The Reconstruction Act was duly carried out; conventions were held; constitutions granting equal suffrage to all, blacks and whites, were enacted, and new State governments installed accordingly, in which, however, the leading white men of each State, since not yet pardoned, could obtain no place either as legislators or as officials. By this procedure, six States were in 1868 readmitted to Congress, as having satisfied the conditions imposed, and the remaining States within the two years following. In July, 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment became a part of the Constitution, having been accepted by three-fourths of the States, and in March, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment, forbidding the voting right of citizens to be "denied or abridged on account of race, colour, or previous condition of servitude," also became by similar acceptance part of the Constitution and binding on all the States. With this, and with the passing in 1870 and 1871 of penal laws, commonly called the Force Acts, intended to protect the negroes in the exercise of the suffrage, the direct interference of the Federal legislature ended. In 1872, by the general Amnesty Act, it readmitted the great bulk of the ex-Confederates to full political rights.

Meanwhile, how had things been going in the Southern States themselves? All the leading whites having been dis-

qualified from voting or taking part in the government, the only factors or forces left were, —

First, such whites as had adhered to the Union throughout the war—in most States neither a numerous nor an influential body.

Secondly, a vast mass of negroes suddenly set free, and absolutely destitute, not only of political experience, but even of the most rudimentary political ideas.

Thirdly, men sent down from the North as agents of the Freedmen's Bureau, or otherwise in connection with the Federal government, and persons who had come of themselves in the hope of profiting by such opportunities for enrichment as the abnormal conditions of the country might create.

The voting strength was, of course, with the negroes, especially in South Carolina and the Gulf States (except Texas); and a certain number were chosen to sit in the legislatures and to fill the less important offices. In the legislatures of South Carolina and Mississippi, they formed the majority; and from the latter State they sent one of themselves to the Federal Senate. But leadership, of course, fell to the whites, who alone were capable of it, and chiefly to those white adventurers whose scanty stock of portable property won for them the name of "carpet-baggers." They organized the negroes for elections, State and local, they tampered with the electoral lists and stuffed the ballot-boxes,<sup>1</sup> they "ran" the legislatures. They pounced upon the lucrative places, satisfying negro claims with posts of less consequence,<sup>2</sup> they devised the various methods by which taxation was increased, debt rolled up, offices created and lavishly paid, frauds of every kind perpetrated for the benefit of themselves and their friends. Such a Saturnalia of robbery and jobbery has seldom been seen in any civilized country, and certainly never before under the forms of free self-government. The coloured voters could hardly be blamed for blindly following the guides who represented to them the party to which they owed their liberty;

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the beautifully simple plan was adopted of providing the ballot-box, carefully locked and sealed at its proper aperture, with a sliding side.

<sup>2</sup> In South Carolina, in 1875, according to the trustworthy evidence of Governor Chamberlain, two hundred persons had been appointed justices of the peace, with a certain civil as well as criminal jurisdiction, who could neither read nor write.

and as they had little property, taxation did not press upon them nor the increase of debt alarm them. Those among the negroes to whom the chief profit accrued were the preachers, who enjoyed a sort of local influence, and could sometimes command the votes of their fellows, and the legislators, who were accustomed, in South Carolina, for instance, to be paid a few dollars for every bill they passed.<sup>1</sup> But nine tenths of the illicit gains went to the whites. Many of them were persons of infamous character who ultimately saved themselves from justice by flight. For the time they enjoyed absolute impunity, without even that check which public opinion imposes on the worst rulers when they themselves belong to the district which they rule.

The position of these adventurers was like that of a Roman provincial governor in the later days of the Republic, or an English official in the East Indies in the earlier days of the Company's conquests, save that they had less to fear from subsequent prosecution than Verres, and less from a parliamentary inquiry than the companions of Clive. The very securities with which the Federal system surrounds State autonomy contributed to encourage their audacity. The National government was not responsible, because the whole machinery of State government was in form complete and to all outward appearance in normal action. But as voting power lay with those who were wholly unfit for citizenship, and had no interest, as taxpayers, in good government, as the legislatures were reckless and corrupt, the judges for the most part subservient, the Federal military officers bound to support what purported to be the constitutional authorities of the State, Congress distant and little inclined to listen to the complaints of those whom it distrusted as rebels,<sup>2</sup> greed was unchecked and roguery unabashed. The methods of plunder were numerous. Every branch of administration became wasteful. Public

<sup>1</sup> An anecdote is told of an old negro in North Carolina who, being discovered counting the fee he had received for his vote in the legislature, said with a chuckle, "I have been sold eleven times in my life, and this is the first time I ever got the money."

<sup>2</sup> Nearly the whole representation in Congress of these States was in the hands of the then ruling Republican party. The Southern members were largely accomplices in the local misgovernment here described, nearly half of them being carpet-baggers from the North, while few of the Northern members had any knowledge of it, some perhaps not caring to enquire.

contracts were jobbed, and the profits shared. Extravagant salaries were paid to legislators; extravagant charges allowed for all sorts of work done at the public cost. But perhaps the commonest form of robbery, and that conducted on the largest scale, was for the legislature to direct the issue of bonds in aid of a railroad or other public work, these bonds being then delivered to contractors who sold them, shared the proceeds with the governing Ring, and omitted to execute the work. Much money was however taken in an even more direct fashion from the State treasury or from that of the local authority; and as not only the guardians of the public funds, but even, in many cases, the courts of law, were under the control of the thieves, discovery was difficult and redress unattainable. In this way the industrious and property-holding classes saw the burdens of the State increase, with no power of arresting the process. In North Carolina, \$14,000,000 worth of railroad bonds were issued, and no railway made. In Alabama, the State debt rose in four years from \$8,356,000 to \$25,503,000, with little or nothing to show for it. In Mississippi, the State levy had been ten cents on the \$100 of assessed value of lands. In 1874, it had risen to fourteen times that rate. In South Carolina, the State debt leapt in four years from \$5,407,000 to \$18,515,000, and Governor Moses, not content with his share of the plunder, openly sold his pardons, of which he granted 457 in two years. But the climax was reached in Louisiana, where, in a single year, the State debt was increased fourfold, and the local debt twofold, while in four years' time the total State and city indebtedness was rolled up by the sum of \$54,000,000, all of which went to the spoilers, and nothing to permanent improvements.

Whether owing to those amiable traits in the national character which often survive the sterner virtues, or to the fact that the thieves were too busy filling their pockets to have leisure for other outrages, this misgovernment was accompanied by less oppression and cruelty than might have been expected. Some such acts there doubtless were, particularly in the rougher districts of the extreme South-west; and in several States the dominant faction, not satisfied with the presence of Federal troops, sought to preserve order by creating bodies of State guards or State police, or a negro militia. In Mis-

issippi the coloured people were enrolled in a "Loyal League." Unlike the Federal civil officials, who were often disreputable and unscrupulous partisans, sometimes most improperly combining the headship of the local Republican organization with an office demanding impartiality,<sup>1</sup> the Federal military officers, though their conduct was sometimes impugned, seem on the whole to have behaved with uprightness and good sense, making their military control as gentle as such a thing ever can be. Nor did the negroes, untutored as they were, and jubilant in their new freedom, show the turbulence or the vindictiveness which might have been looked for in a less kindly race. Nevertheless, disorders broke out. A secret combination, called the Ku Klux Klan, said to have been originally formed in Tennessee by youths for purposes of amusement, spread rapidly through the country, and became credited with the numerous petty outrages which, during 1868 and the following years, were perpetrated upon negroes, and (less frequently) upon whites supposed to be in sympathy with negroes, in the rural South. Many of these outrages were probably the work of village ruffians who had no connection with any organization, still less any political motive. But the impossibility of discovering those who committed them, and the absence of any local efforts to repress them, showed the profound discontent of the better class of whites with the governments which the coloured vote had installed, while unfortunately confirming Congress in its suspicion of the former rebels as being still at heart enemies of the Union and the negro. No open resistance to the Federal troops was attempted; but neither their activity nor the penal laws passed by Congress were effective in checking the floggings, house-burnings, and murders which, during these years, disgraced some districts. Meanwhile, the North grew weary of repression, and began to be moved by the accounts that reached it of "carpet-bag government." A political reaction, due to other causes, had made itself felt in the North; and the old principle of leaving the States to themselves gained more and more upon the popular mind, even within the still dominant Republican party. Though some of

<sup>1</sup> In Louisiana, for instance, the Federal marshal, who was entitled to call on the Federal troops to aid him, was for a time chairman of the Republican State Committee.

its prominent leaders desired, perhaps not without a view to party advantage, to keep down the South, they were overborne by the feeling, always strong in America, that every community to which self-government has been granted must be left to itself to work out its own salvation, and that continued military occupation could not be justified where no revolt was apprehended. The end came in 1876-77. Between 1869 and 1876, the whites had in every Southern State except South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, regained control of the government, and in 1876 those three States were also recovered.<sup>1</sup> The circumstances were different, according to the character of the population in each State. In some a union of the moderate white Republicans with the Democrats, brought about by the disgust of all property holders at the scandals they saw and at the increase to their burdens as tax-payers, had secured legitimately chosen majorities, and ejected the corrupt officials. In some the same result was attained by paying or otherwise inducing the negroes not to go to the polls, or by driving them away by threats or actual violence. Once possessed again of a voting majority, the whites, all of whom had by 1872 been relieved of their disabilities, took good care, by a variety of devices, legal and extra-legal, to keep that majority safe; and in no State has their control of the government been since shaken. President Hayes withdrew, in 1877, such Federal troops as were still left at the South, and none have ever since been despatched thither.

This sketch has been given, not so much because it is a curious phase in the history of democracy, and one not likely ever to recur, either in the United States or elsewhere, as because it has determined and explained the whole subsequent course of events and the present attitude, whereof more anon, of the Southern people. That Congress made some mistakes is proved by the results. Among those results must be reckoned not merely the load of needless debt imposed upon the Southern States, and the retardation of their recovery from the losses of the war, but the driving of all their respectable white citizens into the Democratic party and their alienation from

<sup>1</sup> Those States in which the whites first recovered control, such as Georgia, have generally fared best subsequently. They have had less debt to carry, and commercial confidence was sooner restored.

the Republicans of the North, together with the similar aggregation of the negroes in the Republican party, and consequent creation of a so-called "colour line" in politics. Habits of lawlessness have moreover been perpetuated among the whites, and there has been formed in both parties the pernicious practice of tampering with elections, sometimes by force and sometimes by fraud, a practice which strikes at the very root of free popular government.

But was the great and capital act of the Republican party when it secured the grant of the suffrage to the negroes *en bloc* one of those mistakes? To nearly all Europeans such a step seemed and still seems monstrous. No people could be imagined more hopelessly unfit for political power than this host of slaves; and their unfitness became all the more dangerous because the classes among whom the new voters ought to have found guidance were partly disfranchised and partly forced into hostility. American eyes, however, see the matter in a different light. To them it is an axiom, that without the suffrage there is no true citizenship, and the negro would have appeared to be scarcely free had he received only the private and passive, and not also the public and active rights of a citizen. "I realized in 1867," says General Wade Hampton, one of the most distinguished leaders of the South, "that when a man had been made a citizen of the United States, he could not be debarred from voting on account of his colour. Such exclusion would be opposed to the entire theory of republican institutions."<sup>1</sup> It is true that there were Northern States, such as even the New England Connecticut and the half New England Ohio, as well as Michigan and Pennsylvania, in which persons of colour were so debarred.<sup>2</sup> But the Abolitionist movement and the war had given an immense stimulus to the abstract theory of human rights, and had made the negro so much an object of sympathy to the Northern people, that these restrictions were vanishing before the doctrine of absolute democratic equality and the rights of man as man. There was, moreover, a practical argument of some weight. The gift of the suffrage presented itself to the

<sup>1</sup> *North American Review* for March, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Connecticut as late as 1865 and Ohio as late as 1867 declined to extend equal suffrage to negroes.