

of wealth and population rivalling those of the Middle and Western States. It has recovered its fair share of influence in the national government. It has no regrets over slavery, for it recognizes the barbarizing influence that slavery exerted. Neither does it cherish any dreams of separation. It has now a pride in the Union as well as in its State, and is in some ways more fresh and sanguine than the North, because less cloyed by luxury than the rich are there, and less discouraged by the spread of social unrest than the thoughtful have been there. But for one difficulty, the South might well be thought to be the most promising part of the Union, that part whose advance is likely to be swiftest, and whose prosperity will be not the least secure.

This difficulty, however, is a serious one. It lies in the presence of seven millions of negroes.

CHAPTER XCIII

PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE NEGRO

THE total coloured population of the United States was in 1890 7,470,040, a number greater than that of the English people in the reign of Queen Anne, and one which might anywhere but in North America be deemed to form a considerable nation. Of this total, seven millions (in round numbers) were in the old Slave States, and it is of these only that the present chapter will speak.¹ To understand their distribution in these States, the reader will do well to recall what was said in the last preceding chapter regarding the physical features of the South, for it is by those features that the growth of the coloured population in the various regions of the country has been determined. Though man is of all animals, except perhaps the dog, that which shows the greatest capacity for supporting all climates from Borneo to Greenland, it remains true that certain races of men thrive and multiply only in certain climates. As the races of Northern Europe have been hitherto unable to maintain themselves in the torrid zone, so the African race, being of tropical origin, dwindles away wherever it has to encounter cold winters. In what used to be called the Border States — Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri — the coloured element increases but slowly, or tends slightly to decrease.² In West Virginia, East Kentucky, East Tennessee, and Western North Carolina, the negro is practically unknown in the highest and coolest spots, and in the other parts of that elevated country has scarcely been able to hold his own. It is in the low warm regions that lie near the Gulf Stream and the Gulf of Mexico, and especially in the sea-islands of South Carolina and on the banks of the lower Mississippi that he finds the conditions which are at once most

¹ The total white population of these States was in 1890 13,079,725 and the coloured 6,741,941.

² Kentucky shows a small decrease from 1880 to 1890. There is also an absolute decrease of coloured population in seven other States, — Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Michigan, Nevada, California, Idaho, — and in Arizona.

favourable to his development and most unfavourable to that of the whites. Accordingly it is the eight States nearest the Gulf, — South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, that contain more than half the negro population, which in three of them, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana, exceeds the number of the whites. These eight States show an increase of the coloured population, from 1880 to 1890, at the rate of 19.1 per cent,¹ while in the rest of the South the rate was only 5.5 per cent. It is thus clear that the negro centre of population is more and more shifting southward, and that the African is leaving the colder, higher, and drier lands for regions more resembling his ancient seats in the Old World.

A not less important question is the proportion between the negroes and the whites. In 1790 the negroes were 19.3 per cent or nearly one-fifth of the whole population of the Union. In 1880 they were 13.1 per cent; in 1890 11.9 per cent, or considerably less than one-eighth. Their rate of increase over the whole country in the last decade was 13.11, while that of the whites was 26.68. Even in the former Slave States (which receive very few immigrants from Europe) the increase of the whites during that decade was 24.67, that of the negroes only 13.9 per cent, or little more than half the rate shown by the whites,² while in the eight black States mentioned above the percentage of increase of the white population is 29.63, that of the negroes only 19.10. It thus appears that except in certain parts of these eight States, where physical conditions favourable to the growth of the coloured population prevail, the whites increase everywhere faster than the negroes, and the latter constitute a relatively decreasing element.³ This fact, though suspected previously, has been placed beyond doubt by the census of 1890. It is the dominating fact of the political and social situation.

¹ It was still greater in Arkansas (47.73 per cent), Florida (31.56 per cent), and Texas (25.28 per cent), but the negroes have been in these three States much less numerous than the whites, and the increase is probably largely due to negro immigration from other States.

² Arkansas and Mississippi are the only States which show a greater increase of coloured than of white people; and in the former State, possibly in the latter also, immigration accounts for part of the increase. I take the above figures from *Census Bulletin*, No. 48.

³ That which specially tends to keep down the negro increase is the very large mortality among the children.

Of the economic and industrial state of the whole seven millions it is hard to speak in general terms, so different are the conditions which different parts of the country present. In one point only are those conditions uniform. Everywhere, alike in the Border States and in the farthest South, in the cities, both great and small, and in the rural districts, the coloured population constitute the poorest and socially lowest stratum, corresponding in this respect to the new immigrants in the Northern States, although, as we shall presently observe, they are far more sharply and permanently divided than are those immigrants from the classes above them. They furnish nine-tenths of the unskilled labour, and a still larger proportion of the domestic and hotel labour. Some, though a comparatively small number, have found their way into the skilled handicrafts, such as joinery and metal work; and many are now employed in the mines and iron foundries of South-eastern Tennessee and Northern Alabama, where they receive wages sometimes equal to those paid to the white workmen, and are even occasionally admitted to the same trade-unions.¹ In textile factories they are deemed decidedly inferior to the whites; the whirr of the machinery is said to daze them or to send them to sleep. On the other hand, they handle tobacco better than the whites, and practically monopolize this large industry. In all the cities a great part of the small retail trade is in their hands, as are also such occupations as those of barber, shoe-black, street vendor of drinks or fruit, together with the humbler kinds of railway service. In the rural districts the immense majority are either hired labourers or tenants of small farms, the latter class becoming more numerous the further south one goes into the hot and malarious regions, where the white man is less disposed to work on his own land. Of these tenants many — and some are both active and thrifty — cultivate upon a system of crop-sharing, like that of the *métayers* in France. Not a few have bought plots of land, and work it for themselves. Of those who farm either their own land or that for which they pay rent, an increasing num-

¹ I find it stated (1893) that in West Tennessee the average pay per day of the skilled white labourer is \$2.50, of the coloured \$1.60; and conceive that this may fairly represent the proportion in most trades, though perhaps less in mining than in some others. A large employer of labour in Virginia assured me in 1880 that he paid some of his negroes (iron-workers) as much as \$4.50 per day. He added that they worked along with the whites, and drank less.

ber are raising crops for the market, and steadily improving their condition. Others, however, are content with getting from the soil enough food to keep their families; and this is more especially the case in the lower lands along the coast, where the population is almost wholly black, and little affected by the influences either of commerce or of the white race. In these hot lowlands the negro lives much as he lived on the plantations in the old days, except that he works less, because a moderate amount of labour produces enough for his bare subsistence. No railway comes near him. He sees no newspaper: he is scarcely at all in contact with any one above his own condition. Thus there are places, the cities especially, where the negro is improving industrially, because he has to work hard and comes into constant relation with the whites; and other places, where he need work very little, and where, being left to his own resources, he is in danger of relapsing into barbarism. These differences in his material progress in different parts of the country must be constantly borne in mind when one attempts to form a picture of his present intellectual and moral state.

The phenomena he presents in this latter aspect are absolutely new in the annals of the world. History is a record of the progress towards civilization of races originally barbarous. But that progress has in all previous cases been slow and gradual. In the case of the chief Asiatic and European races, the earlier stages are lost in the mists of antiquity. Even the middle and later stages, as we gather them from the writings of the historians of antiquity and from the records of the Dark and Middle Ages, show an advance in which there is nothing sudden or abrupt, but rather a process of what may be called tentative development, the growth and enlargement of the human mind resulting in and being accompanied by a gradual improvement of political institutions and of the arts and sciences. In this process there are no leaps and bounds; and it is the work, not of any one race alone, but of the mingled rivalry and co-operation of several. Utterly dissimilar is the case of the African negro, caught up in and whirled along with the swift movement of the American democracy. In it we have a singular juxtaposition of the most primitive and the most recent, the most rudimentary and the most highly developed, types of culture. Not greater is the

interval which separates the chipped flints of the Stone Age from the Maxim gun of to-day. A body of savages is violently carried across the ocean and set to work as slaves on the plantations of masters who are three or four thousand years in advance of them in mental capacity and moral force. They are treated like horses or oxen, are kept at labour by the lash, are debarred from even the elements of education, have no more status before the law, no more share in the thought or the culture of their owner than the sheep which he shears. The children and grandchildren of those whom the slave-ship brought to the plantation remain like their parents, save indeed that they have learnt a new and highly developed tongue and have caught up so much of a new religion as comes to them through preachers of their own blood. Those who have house-work to do, or who live in the few and small towns, pick up some knowledge of white ways, and imitate them to the best of their power. But the great mass remain in their notions and their habits much what their ancestors were in the forests of the Niger or the Congo. Suddenly, even more suddenly than they were torn from Africa, they find themselves, not only freed, but made full citizens and active members of the most popular government the world has seen, treated as fit to bear an equal part in ruling, not themselves only, but also their recent masters. Rights which the agricultural labourers of England did not obtain till 1885 were in 1867 thrust upon these children of nature, whose highest form of pleasure had hitherto been to caper to the strains of a banjo.

This tremendous change arrested one set of influences that were telling on the negro, and put another set in motion. The relation of master and servant came to an end, and with it the discipline of compulsory labour and a great part of such intercourse as there had been between the white and the black races. Very soon the whites began to draw away from the negro, who became less a friend in fact the more he was an equal in theory. Presently the mixture of blood stopped, a mixture which had been doing something for the blacks in leavening their mass, — only slightly on the plantations, but to some extent in the towns and among the domestic servants, — with persons of superior energy and talent. On the other hand, there were immediately turned on the freedman a volume of new forces which had scarcely affected him as a slave.

He had now to care for himself, in sickness and in health. He might go where he would, and work as much or as little as he pleased. He had a vote to give, or to sell. Education became accessible; and facilities for obtaining it were promptly accorded to him, first by his Northern liberators, but soon by his old masters also. As he learned to read and to vote, a crowd of modern American ideas, political, social, religious, and economic, poured in upon him through the newspapers. No such attempt has ever been made before to do for a race at one stroke what in other times and countries nature has spent centuries in doing. Other races have desired freedom and a share in political power. They have had to strive, and their efforts have braced and disciplined them. But these things were thrust upon the negro, who found himself embarrassed by boons he had not thought of demanding.

To understand how American ideas work in an African brain, and how American institutions are affecting African habits, one must consider what are the character and gifts of the negro himself.

He is by nature affectionate, docile, pliable, submissive, and in these respects most unlike the Red Indian, whose conspicuous traits are pride and a certain dogged inflexibility. He is seldom cruel or vindictive, — which the Indian often is, — nor is he prone to violence, except when spurred by lust. His intelligence is rather quick than solid; and though not wanting in a sort of shrewdness, he shows the childishness as well as the lack of self-control which belongs to the primitive peoples. A nature highly impressionable, emotional, and unstable is in him appropriately accompanied by a love of music, while for art he has — unlike the Red Indian — no taste or turn whatever. Such talent as he has runs to words; he learns languages easily and writes and speaks fluently, but shows no capacity for abstract thinking, for scientific inquiry, or for any kind of invention. It is, however, not so conspicuously on the intellectual side that his weakness lies, as in the sphere of will and action. Having neither foresight nor "roundsight," he is heedless and unthrifty, easily elated and depressed, with little tenacity of purpose, and but a feeble wish to better his condition. Sloth, like that into which the negroes of the Antilles have sunk, cannot be generally charged upon the American coloured man, partly perhaps because the climate is less enervating and nature less bountiful.

Although not so steady a workman as is the white, he is less troublesome to his employers, because less disposed to strike. It is by his toil that a large part of the cotton, rice, and sugar crop of the South is now raised. But any one who knows the laborious ryot or coolie of the East Indies is struck by the difference between a race on which ages of patient industry have left their stamp and the volatile children of Africa.

Among the modes or avenues in and by which the influences of white America are moulding the negro, five deserve to be specially noted, those of the schools, of the churches, of literature, of industry, and of business or social relations.

Looking merely at the figures, elementary education would seem to have made extraordinary progress. In the former Slave States there are now 52 per cent of the coloured population of school age enrolled on the books of some school, the percentage of white pupils to the white population of school age in the same States being 67, and the percentage of enrolments to population over the whole United States 69.¹ In these States the coloured people are 30.98 per cent of the total population, and the coloured pupils 27.37 per cent of the total school enrolments. A smaller percentage of them than of white children is, therefore, on the books of the schools; but when it is remembered that thirty-five years ago only an infinitesimally small percentage were at school at all, and that in many States it was a penal offence to teach a negro to read, the progress made is remarkable. Between 1877 and 1889, while the white pupils in the common schools of the South increased 70 per cent, the coloured pupils increased 113 per cent. It must not, however, be concluded from these figures that nearly the whole of the coloured population are growing up possessed even of the rudiments of education. The ratio of attendance to school enrolment is, indeed, almost as good for the negroes as for the whites (62.14 against 62.48), the negroes, both parents and children, having a desire for instruction. But the school-terms are so short in most of the Southern States — the average number of days' schooling in the year for each pupil being only 100 for the South-eastern States, and 95 for the South-western against 168 in the North-eastern — that a large number of whites and a still larger number of coloured children receive too little teaching to enable them to read and write with ease. Thus out of 4,759,040

¹ *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1890-91.*
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negroes in the old Slave States over ten years of age, 2,887,826, or nearly 61 per cent, are returned as illiterates.¹ That the amount of higher education — seminary, collegiate, or university education — obtained by the negroes is not only absolutely small, but incomparably smaller than that obtained by the whites, is no more than might be expected from the fact that they constitute the poorest part of the population. The total number of institutions of this description was in 1891 as follows:² —

Normal schools,	52, with	10,042 pupils.
Secondary schools,	47, with	11,837 pupils.
Universities and colleges, ³	25, with	8396 pupils.
Schools of theology,	25, with	755 pupils.
Schools of law,	5, with	121 pupils.
Schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy,	5, with	306 pupils.
Schools for the deaf and dumb and the blind,	16, with	536 pupils.

These universities are, of course, on a comparatively humble scale, and most of them might rather be called secondary schools. To these figures I may add that the grants made by the State governments to common schools — in the South it is usually from the State treasury and not from local taxation that school funds are derived — are generally distributed equally to white and to coloured schools; a circumstance which appears the more creditable to the good feeling and wisdom of the ruling whites when it is remembered that since they hold nearly all the property, they pay by far the larger part of the taxes, State and local. These funds, however, nearly all go to elementary education, and the institutions which provide higher education for the negro are quite unequal to the demands made upon them. Swarms of applicants for admission have to be turned away from the already over-crowded existing upper and normal schools and colleges; and thus the supply of qualified teachers for the coloured schools is greatly below the needs of the case. The total number is at present only 24,150, with 1,324,937 pupils to deal with. In the white schools, with 3,539,670

¹ Abstract of the census of 1890, Table 14.

The proportion of illiterates is highest in South Carolina (64.1 per cent), Georgia (67.3), Alabama (69.1), and Louisiana (72.1); lowest in the District of Columbia (35), and Oklahoma (39.2). The Territory of Oklahoma was not a Slave State, but its negro population (only 2,290 over ten years of age) is very small, and consists of negroes who have recently arrived from the older South.

² *Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1890-91*, p. 1962.

³ Including preparatory and primary departments of universities.

pupils, there are 79,062 teachers, a proportion (about 1 teacher to 44 pupils) obviously much too low, and too low even if we allow for the difference between enrolment and attendance. But the proportion in the coloured schools is lower still (1 to 53), and the teachers themselves are less instructed. The need for secondary and normal schools is, therefore, still urgent, though much has been and is being done by Northern benevolence for this admirable purpose.¹ There is something pathetic in the eagerness of the negroes, parents, young people, and children, to obtain instruction. They seem to think that the want of it is what keeps them below the whites, just as in the riots which broke out in South Carolina during Sherman's invasion, the negro mob burnt a library at Columbia because, as they said, it was from the books that "the white folks got their sense." And they have a notion (which, to be sure, is not confined to them) that it is the want of book-learning which condemns the vast bulk of their race to live by manual labor, and that, therefore, by acquiring such learning they may themselves rise in the industrial scale.

In the days of slavery, religion was practically the only civilizing influence which told upon the plantation hands. But religion, like everything else that enters the mind, is conditioned by the mental state of the recipient. Among the negroes, it took a highly emotional and sensational form, in which there was little apprehension of doctrine and still less of virtue, while physical excitement constantly passed into ecstasy, hysterics, and the other phenomena which accompany what are called in America camp-meetings. This form it has hitherto generally retained. The evils have been palpable, but the good has been greater than the evil; and one fears to conjecture what this vast mass of Africans might have been had no such influence been at work to soften and elevate them, and to create a sort of tie between them and their masters. Christianity, however, has been among the negroes as it often was in the Dark Ages and as it is in some countries even today, widely divorced from morality. The negro preachers, the natural and generally the only leaders of their people, are

¹ Among the great benefactions whose income is applied for the education of the coloured people special mention may be made of the Peabody Fund, the John F. Slater Fund, and the Daniel Hand Fund, all of which seem to be very wisely administered. I find the total annual sum given by the North to normal and collegiate education among the negroes estimated at a million dollars.