

(doubtless with noble exceptions) by no means a model class, while through the population at large religious belief and even religious fervour are found not incompatible with great laxity in sexual relations and a proneness to petty thefts. Fortunately, here also there is evidence of improvement. The younger pastors are described as being more rarely lazy and licentious than were those of the older generation; their preaching appeals less to passion and more to reason. As it is only coloured preachers who reach negro congregations, the importance of such an improvement can hardly be overestimated.<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, an enormous difference between the coloured churches in the cities, especially those of the Border States, where one finds a comparatively educated clergy and laity, with ideas of decorum modelled on those of their white neighbours, and the pure negro districts further south, in some of which, as in parts of Louisiana, not merely have the old superstitions been retained, but there has been a marked relapse into the Obeah rites and serpent-worship of African heathendom. How far this has gone no one can say. There are parts of the lower Mississippi valley as little explored, so far as the mental and moral condition of the masses is concerned, as are the banks of the Congo and the Benué.

From what has been said of the state of education, it will have been gathered that the influence of books is confined to extremely few, and that even of newspapers to a small fraction of the coloured people. Nevertheless, the significance of whatever forms the mind of that small fraction must not be underestimated. The few thousands who read books or magazines,

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Philip A. Bruce says (*Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1892, p. 732): "The improvement of the character of the negro preachers is even more important than the improvement of the character of negro teachers; but it is an end more difficult to reach because the preachers cannot be submitted after admission to an ordeal that tests their fitness for the positions to be filled."

Mr. Bruce's book, *The Plantation Negro as a Freeman* (1889), presents a striking, though perhaps too gloomy a picture, of the condition of the race.

Dr. Curry, who knows the South thoroughly and has so admirably administered the Slater Fund, says, "One of the chief drawbacks to civilization in the negro race is the exceeding difficulty of giving a predominant ethical character to his religion. In the Black Belt, religion and virtue are often considered as distinct and separable things. The moral element, good character, is eliminated from the essential ingredients of Christianity, and good citizenship, womanliness, honesty, truth, chastity, cleanliness, trustworthiness are not always of the essence of religious obligation. An intelligent, pious, courageous ministry is indispensable to any hopeful attempt to lift up the negro race." — *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1892, p. 732.

the few tens of thousands who see a daily paper, acquire the ideas and beliefs and aspirations of the normal white citizen, subject of course to the inherent differences in race character already referred to. They are in a sense more American than the recent immigrants from Central Europe and from Italy, who are now a substantial element in the population of the Middle and Western States. Within this small section of the coloured people are the natural leaders of the millions who have not yet attained to what may be called the democratic American consciousness. And the number of those upon whom books and newspapers play, in whom democratic ideas stimulate discontent with the present inferiority of their people, is steadily, and in some districts, rapidly increasing. The efforts of those who are best fitted to lead have been hitherto checked by the jealousy which the mass is apt to feel for those who rise to prominence; but this tendency may decline, and there will be no reason for surprise if men of eloquence and ambition are one day found to give voice to the sentiments of their brethren as Frederick Douglass did.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of industry is another name for the influence of self-help. As a slave, the negro was no doubt taught to give steady, though unintelligent, labour; and this was probably a step forward from his condition in Africa. But labour all of it performed under supervision, and none of it followed by any advantage to the labourer except relief from the lash, labour whose aim was to accomplish not the best possible but the least that would suffice, did nothing to raise the character or to train the intelligence. Every day's work that the negro has done since he became a freedman has helped him. Most of the work is rough work, whether on the land or in the cities, and is done for low wages. But the number of those who, either as owners or as tenant farmers, raise their own crops for the market, and of those who are finding their way into skilled employments, is an always increasing number. I have seen it stated that in 1892 the Southern negroes paid taxes on property valued at more than \$14,000,000, practically all of which has been acquired since 1865. To raise crops for the market is an education in thrift, foresight, and business aptitude, as well as in agricul-

<sup>1</sup> I remember to have listened to a striking speech by a negro in Richmond in which he appealed to the historic glories of the State of Virginia, and sought to rouse the audience by reminding them that they too were Virginians.



ture; to follow a skilled industry is to train the intelligence as well as the hand, and the will as well as the intelligence. There is, unfortunately, very little provision for the instruction of the young negroes in any handicraft, and the need of means for imparting it is even more urgent than is that of secondary schools. It is satisfactory to know that the necessity is beginning to be recognized, and some effort made to provide industrial training. Dr. W. T. Harris observes with perfect truth:—

“With better industrial habits there comes a better style of living. Though most of the negroes still live in rude cabins, no better than the huts which served them as slaves, they who own or rent land have begun to erect decent houses, and furnish them with taste, while in the suburbs of a city the negro tradesman has sometimes as neat a villa as the white of like occupation, though generally obliged to inhabit the coloured quarter.”

Against the industrial progress of the negro there must be set two depressing phenomena. One is the increase of insanity, very marked during the last few decades, and probably attributable to the increased facilities which freedom has given for obtaining liquor, and to the stress which independence and education have imposed on the undeveloped brain of a backward race. The other, not unconnected with the former, is the large amount of crime. Most of it is petty crime, chiefly thefts of hogs and poultry, but there are also a good many crimes against women. Seventy per cent of the convicts in Southern jails are negroes;<sup>1</sup> and though one must allow for the fact that they are the poorest part of the population and that the law is probably more strictly enforced against them than against the whites, this is a proportion double that of their numbers.<sup>2</sup> Even in the District of Columbia more than half the arrests are among the coloured people, though they are only one third of the inhabitants.

<sup>1</sup> The South is still far behind the North in matters of prison management. Convicts, and sometimes white as well as coloured convicts, are in many States hired out to private employers or companies for rough work, and very harshly treated.

<sup>2</sup> It must however be observed that in the rest of the Union (North East, North Central and West), the proportion of prisoners in the jails is much higher among the foreign born than in the population at large, doubtless because they are the poorest class. The foreign born are 20 per cent of the population and constitute 37 per cent of the prisoners. The foreign born and children of foreign parents, taken together, constitute 49 per cent of the prisoners.

The most potent agency in the progress of the humbler and more ignorant sections of a community has always been their intercourse with those who are more advanced. In the United States it is by their social commixture with the native citizens that European immigrants become so quickly assimilated, the British in two or three years, the Germans and Scandinavians in eight or ten. But the pre-condition of such commixture is the absence of race repulsion and especially the possibility of intermarriage. In the case of the American negro, the race repulsion exists, and fusion by intermarriage is deemed impossible. The day of his liberation was also the day when the whites began to shun intercourse with him, and when opinion began to condemn, not merely regular marriage with a person of colour, for that had been always forbidden, but even an illicit union.

To understand the very peculiar phenomena which mark the relations of the two races, one must distinguish between the Northern and Southern States.

In the North there was before the war a marked aversion to the negro and a complete absence of social intercourse with him. The negroes were, of course, among the poorest and least educated persons in the community. But the poorest white looked down upon them just as much as the richest; and in many States they enjoyed no political rights. The sympathy felt for them during the Civil War, the evidence of courage and capacity for discipline they gave as soldiers in the Federal Army, and the disposition to protect them which the Republican party showed during the Reconstruction period, have modified this aversion; and they have now comparatively little to complain of in the North. They are occasionally admitted to some inferior political office, or even to a seat in a State legislature. The Women's Christian Temperance Union receives them as members, and so does the Grand Army of the Republic, though they are grouped in distinct "posts." People sometimes take pleasure in going out of their way to compliment them. A few years ago, for instance, a coloured student was chosen by his companions at Harvard University to be the "class orator" of the year; and I know of cases in which the lawyers of a city have signed memorials recommending a coloured barrister for appointment to an important Federal office. Nevertheless, there is practically no social intermix-



ture of white and coloured people. Except on the Pacific coast, a negro never sits down to dinner with a white man, in a railway refreshment-room. You never encounter him at a private party. He is not received in a hotel of the better sort, no matter how rich he may be. He will probably be refused a glass of soda water at a drug store. He is not shaved in a place frequented by white men, not even by a barber of his own colour. He worships in a church of his own. No native white woman would dream of receiving his addresses. Nor does it make any difference that he is three parts or seven parts white, if the stain of colour can be still discerned. Kindly condescension is the best he can look for, accompanied by equality of access to a business or profession. Social equality is utterly out of his reach.

In the South, on the other hand, the whites had before the war no sense of personal repulsion from the negro. The domestic slave was in the closest relation with his master's family. Sometimes he was his master's trusted friend. The white child grew up with the black child as its playmate. The legal inequality was so immense that familiarity was not felt to involve any disturbance of the attitude of command. With emancipation there must needs come a change; but the change would have come more gently, and left a better relation subsisting, had it not been for the unhappy turn which things took in the Reconstruction period under the dominance of the negro vote. The white people were then thoroughly frightened. They thought that the aim of the North was to force them to admit not only the civic but the social equality of the freedmen, and they resolved, if one can apply the language of deliberate purpose to what was rather an unconscious and uncontrollable impulse, to maintain the social inferiority of the negro as well as to exclude him from political power. They are accustomed to say, and to believe, that they know him better and like him better than the Northern people do. That there is not among the educated whites of the South any hostility to the race as a race is true enough. The sons of the planters, and of the better class generally, have kindly recollections of their former slaves, and get on well with their negro servants and workmen; while among the elder freedmen there is still a loyal attachment to the children of their former masters. The poor whites, however, dislike the negroes, resent the slightest assumption

of equality on the part of the latter,<sup>1</sup> and show their hatred by violence, sometimes even by ferocity, when any disturbance arises or when a negro fugitive has to be pursued. Except so far as it is involved in domestic service, the servants in the South being nearly all negroes, there is now little intercourse between whites and blacks. In many States the law requires the railroad and even the horse-car companies to provide separate cars for the latter, though there are cities, such as Baltimore and Washington, where the same horse-cars are used by both races. In most parts of the South a person of colour cannot enter a public refreshment-room used by the whites except as the servant of a white; and one may see the most respectable and, possibly, even educated coloured woman, perhaps almost white, forced into the coloured car among rough negroes, while the black nurse in charge of a white child is admitted to the white car. The two races are everywhere taught in distinct schools and colleges, though in one or two places negroes have been allowed to study in the medical or law classes. They worship in different churches. Though they read the ordinary papers, they also support distinct organs for coloured men. They have distinct Young Mens' Christian Associations. With some exceptions in the case of unskilled trades, they are not admitted to trade unions.<sup>2</sup> In concert halls and theatres, if the coloured are admitted at all, it is to an inferior part of the chamber. On the other hand, negroes are sometimes called to serve on juries, and civil justice seems to be administered quite fairly as between them and the whites.

Intermarriage is, in every State, forbidden by law, and, so far as a traveller can ascertain, very few children from parents of different bloods are now born.<sup>3</sup> And it must, I fear, be added that in some parts of the South a white man would run little more risk of being hanged for the murder of a negro than a Mussulman in Turkey for the murder of a Christian.

Under so complete a system of separation, it is clear that the influence of social intercourse between whites and blacks, an

<sup>1</sup> A Virginian observed to me, "Our whites don't molest the negroes so long as the negroes don't presume!"

<sup>2</sup> Their unions are however admitted to the federation of the Knights of Labour.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Brackett (*Progress of the Coloured People of Maryland*) notes instances of convictions and imprisonments under this law in Maryland.



influence to which the domestic slaves before the war owed much, now counts for little. But the question of the attitude of the whites has another side. It means more than the suspension of a civilizing agency. There is evidence to show that the coloured generation which has grown up since the war, and which has been in less close touch with the white people than were the slaves and freedmen of the last generation, is much less friendly to them. It has lost the instinctive sense of subservience and dependence, and its more educated members feel acutely the contrast between their legal equality and their inequality in every other respect. The whites perceive this; and the lower class among them become still more suspicious and violent. In this situation there lie possibilities of danger. The strained relations of the races appear most frequently in the lynchings of negroes so often reported from the South. It is extremely hard to ascertain the truth of the reports regarding these lawless acts, for the newspapers often invent horrors, and there is little judicial investigation made into those whose reality is undeniable. I cannot vouch for the statement which I have read, that in 1892 241 lynchings took place in the United States, 200 of which were in the South; and that of the persons put to death 161 were negroes, and 80 whites.<sup>1</sup> As might be expected, many exaggerations appear and obtain credence in Europe as well as sometimes in the North. But there can be no doubt that over the South, and, to a much smaller extent, in the North also, negroes accused of assassinating white men, or of outraging white women or children are frequently seized by white mobs and summarily killed; that occasionally, though probably not often, an innocent man perishes, and that the killing is sometimes accompanied by circumstances of revolting cruelty. Now and then the culprit is burned alive. Often his body, after he has been hanged, is riddled with bullets, a piece of barbarism akin to the Eastern habit of mutilating the corpses of the slain. The excuses offered for these acts are that white women, especially in sparsely inhabited regions, are in considerable danger from the lust of brutal negroes, and that the swift apprehen-

<sup>1</sup> The Census Bulletin on Homicide (No. 182) states that the county sheriffs reported 117 lynchings during the year 1889, of which 94 were in the South. Oddly enough this was exactly the number of executions reported from the South. These reports, however, are believed to be incomplete.

sion and slaughter of the culprit not only strikes greater dread than the regular process of justice, but does not gratify the negro's enjoyment of the pomp and ceremony of a formal trial before a judge. It is also declared, and with truth, that whites also are lynched, though not so frequently and in a less atrocious way,<sup>1</sup> that the negroes themselves occasionally lynch a negro, that it is hard for the executive authority, with no force except the militia at its command, to protect prisoners and repress disorder, and that the lynchings are the work of a comparatively small and rude part of the white population; the better citizens disapproving, but with American nonchalance declining to interfere.

Whatever palliations may be found in these circumstances, — and it is quite true that in a thinly peopled and unpoliced country white women do stand in serious risk, — there can be no doubt that the practice of lynching has a pernicious effect on the whites themselves, accustoming them to cruelty, and fostering a spirit of lawlessness which tells for evil on every branch of government and public life. Were the negroes less cowed by the superior strength and numbers of the whites, reprisals, now rare, would be more frequent. Yet even in a race with so little vindictiveness of temper, terrible mischief is done. The tendency to accept the leadership of the whites, and to seek progress rather by industrial and educational than by political efforts is damped, and the establishment of good feeling and a sense of public security is retarded. The humble negro shuns contact with the whites, not knowing when some band of roughs may mishandle him; and sometimes a lynching is followed by a sudden rush of coloured emigration from the State or district where it has happened.<sup>2</sup> The educated and aspiring negro resents the savage spirit shown towards his colour, though he feels his helplessness too keenly to attempt any action which could check it.

This social repulsion and its consequences present a painful

<sup>1</sup> There was, however, an instance two or three years ago, in which the party which was hunting for a white murderer announced their intention of burning him. I do not know whether he was caught. I have even read in the newspapers of a case in which a crowd allowed two women to flog a third to death, but this was in a wild mountain region. All the parties were whites.

<sup>2</sup> Not long ago the negroes flocked into the new Territory of Oklahoma, hoping to obtain better security for themselves by their presence in considerable numbers.



contrast to the effect of the four previous influences we have examined. As respects their intelligence, their character, their habits of industry, the coloured people are making distinct if not rapid progress. It is a progress very unequal as regards the different regions of the country, and perhaps may not extend to some districts of the so-called Black Belt, which stretches from the coast of South Carolina across the Gulf States. It is most evident in the matter of education, less evident as respects religion and the influence of literature. Its economic results are perceptible in the accumulation of property by city workmen, in the acquisition of small farms by rural cultivators, in the slow, but steady, increase in the number of coloured people in the professions of medicine, law, and literature. Were it accompanied by a growth of good feeling between whites and negroes, and a more natural and friendly intercourse between them in business and in social matters, the horizon would be bright, and the political difficulties, which I shall presently describe, need not cause alarm. This intercourse is, however, conspicuously absent. The progress of the coloured people has been accompanied by the evolution of social classes within their own body. Wealthy and educated negroes, such as one may now find in cities like Baltimore, Louisville, Richmond, Atlanta, and New Orleans, have come to form a cultured group, who are looked up to by the poorer class.<sup>1</sup> But these cultured groups are as little in contact with their white neighbours as are the humblest coloured labourers, perhaps even less so. No prospect is open to them, whatever wealth or culture they may acquire, of finding an entrance into white society, and they are made to feel in a thousand ways that they belong to a caste condemned to perpetual inferiority. Their spokesmen in the press have latterly so fully realized the position as to declare that they do not seek social equality with the whites, that they are quite

<sup>1</sup> The mulattoes or quadroons are, as a rule, more advanced than the pure blacks, and generally avoid intermarriage with the latter. Now and then, however, a pure black may be found of remarkable intelligence. Such a one, a Louisiana farmer who read, and talked with sense and judgment about, the Greek philosophers, is described in the graphic and instructive sketches called *Studies in the South*.—*Atlantic Monthly*, for February, 1882. At the Hampton Normal Institute, the school so admirably worked by a devoted friend of the negro, the late Gen. S. C. Armstrong, the award of honours showed that the mixed blood was not so intellectually superior to the full black as has been generally supposed.

willing to build up a separate society of their own, and seek neither intermarriage nor social intercourse, but that what they do ask is equal opportunity in business, the professions, and politics, equal recognition of the worth of their manhood, and a discontinuance of the social humiliations they are now compelled to endure.<sup>1</sup>

From this attempt to sketch the phenomena of the present, I proceed to consider the future. The future has two problems to solve. One is political; the other social. How is the determination of the whites to rule to be reconciled with the possession by the negroes of equal rights of suffrage? How can the social severance or antagonism of the two races,—by whichever term we are to describe it,—the haughty assertion of superiority by the whites and the suppressed resentment of the more advanced among the coloured people, be prevented from ripening into a settled distrust and hostility which may affect the peace and prosperity of the South for centuries to come?

The methods whereby the negroes have been prevented from exercising the rights of suffrage vested in them by law have been described in the last preceding chapter. These means are now seldom violent; but whether violent or pacific, they have been almost uniformly successful. In the so-called Border States, the whites are in so great a majority that they do not care to interfere with the coloured vote, except now and then by the use of money. Through the rest of the South the negro has come to realize that he will not be permitted to exercise any influence on the government; and his interest in coming to the polls has therefore declined. This is true of all sorts of elections, just as the determination of the whites to suppress his vote is no less strong as respects Federal elections, whose result cannot directly affect the administration of State or local affairs, or the imposition of State or local taxes, than it is in State and local elections. I have already explained that, although contempt for the negro as a citizen has some share in this determination, its main cause is the alarm so generally felt by the whites at the possibility of negro domination. A stranger, whether from the North or from Europe, inclines to think this alarm groundless. He perceives that the

<sup>1</sup> See an interesting article by a distinguished coloured clergyman (since deceased), Dr. J. C. Price, in the *Forum*, for January, 1891.