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# BACK TOWARD SLAVERY:

THE WHITE SUPREMACY

excerpts from  
**BLACK RECONSTRUCTION IN AMERICA**

by **W.E.B. Du Bois**



## THE WHITE WORKER

In all this consideration, we have so far ignored the white workers of the South and we have done this because the labor movement ignored them and the abolitionists ignored them; and above all, they were ignored by Northern capitalists and Southern planters. They were in many respects almost a forgotten mass of men. Cairnes describes the slave South, the period just before the war:

"It resolves itself into three classes, broadly distinguished from each other, and connected by no common interest—the slaves on whom devolves all the regular industry, the slaveholders who reap all its fruits, and an idle and lawless rabble who live dispersed over vast plains in a condition little removed from absolute barbarism."

From all that has been written and said about the ante-bellum South, one almost loses sight of about 5,000,000 white people in 1860 who lived in the South and held no slaves. Even among the two million slaveholders, an oligarchy of 8,000 really ruled the South, while as an observer said: "For twenty years, I do not recollect ever to have seen or heard these non-slaveholding whites referred to by the Southern gentleman as constituting any part of what they called the South."<sup>5</sup> They were largely ignorant and degraded; only 25% could read and write.

The condition of the poor whites has been many times described:

"A wretched log hut or two are the only habitations in sight. Here reside, or rather take shelter, the miserable cultivators of the ground, or a still more destitute class who make a precarious living by peddling 'lightwood' in the city. . . .

"These cabins . . . are dens of filth. The bed if there be a bed is a layer of something in the corner that defies scenting. If the bed is nasty, what of the floor? What of the whole enclosed space? What of the creatures themselves? Pough! Water in use as a purifier is unknown. Their faces are bedaubed with the muddy accumulation of weeks. They just give them a wipe when they see a stranger to take off the blackest dirt. . . . The poor wretches seem startled when you address them, and answer your questions cowering like culprits."<sup>6</sup>

Olmsted said: "I saw as much close packing, filth and squalor, in certain blocks inhabited by laboring whites in Charleston, as I have witnessed in any Northern town of its size; and greater evidences of brutality and ruffianly character, than I have ever happened to see, among an equal population of this class, before."<sup>7</sup>

Two classes of poor whites have been differentiated: the mountain whites and the poor whites of the lowlands. "Below a dirty and ill-favored house, down under the bank on the shingle near the river, sits a family of five people, all ill-clothed and unclean; a bear-eyed old

woman, a younger woman with a mass of tangled red hair hanging about her shoulders, indubitably suckling a baby; a little girl with the same auburn evidence of Scotch ancestry; a boy, and a younger child all gathered about a fire made among some bricks, surrounding a couple of iron saucepans, in which is a dirty mixture looking like mud, but probably warmed-up sorghum syrup, which with a few pieces of corn pone, makes their breakfast.

"Most of them are illiterate and more than correspondingly ignorant. Some of them had Indian ancestors and a few bear evidences of Negro blood. The so-called 'mountain boomer,' says an observer, 'has little self-respect and no self-reliance. . . . So long as his corn pile lasts the "cracker" lives in contentment, feasting on a sort of hoe cake made of grated corn meal mixed with salt and water and baked before the hot coals, with addition of what game the forest furnishes him when he can get up the energy to go out and shoot or trap it. . . . The irregularities of their moral lives cause them no sense of shame. . . . But, notwithstanding these low moral conceptions, they are of an intense religious excitability.'"<sup>8</sup>

Above this lowest mass rose a middle class of poor whites in the making. There were some small farmers who had more than a mere sustenance and yet were not large planters. There were overseers. There was a growing class of merchants who traded with the slaves and free Negroes and became in many cases larger traders, dealing with the planters for the staple crops. Some poor whites rose to the professional class, so that the rift between the planters and the mass of the whites was partially bridged by this smaller intermediate class.

While revolt against the domination of the planters over the poor whites was voiced by men like Helper, who called for a class struggle to destroy the planters, this was nullified by deep-rooted antagonism to the Negro, whether slave or free. If black labor could be expelled from the United States or eventually exterminated, then the fight against the planter could take place. But the poor whites and their leaders could not for a moment contemplate a fight of united white and black labor against the exploiters. Indeed, the natural leaders of the poor whites, the small farmer, the merchant, the professional man, the white mechanic and slave overseer, were bound to the planters and repelled from the slaves and even from the mass of the white laborers in two ways: first, they constituted the police patrol who could ride with planters and now and then exercise unlimited force upon recalcitrant or runaway slaves; and then, too, there was always a chance that they themselves might also become planters by saving money, by investment, by the power of good luck; and the only heaven that attracted them was the life of the great Southern planter.

There were a few weak associations of white mechanics, such as printers and shipwrights and iron molders, in 1850-1860, but practically no labor movement in the South.

Charles Nordhoff states that he was told by a wealthy Alabaman, in 1860, that the planters in his region were determined to discontinue altogether the employment of free mechanics. "On my own place," he said, "I have slave carpenters, slave blacksmiths, and slave wheelwrights, and thus I am independent of free mechanics." And a certain Alfred E. Mathews remarks: "I have seen free white mechanics obliged to stand aside while their families were suffering for the necessities of life, when the slave mechanics, owned by rich and influential men, could get plenty of work; and I have heard these same white mechanics breathe the most bitter curses against the institution of slavery and the slave aristocracy."

The resultant revolt of the poor whites, just as the revolt of the slaves, came through migration. And their migration, instead of being restricted, was freely encouraged. As a result, the poor whites left the South in large numbers. In 1860, 399,700 Virginians were living out of their native state. From Tennessee, 344,765 emigrated; from North Carolina, 272,606, and from South Carolina, 256,868. The majority of these had come to the Middle West and it is quite possible that the Southern states sent as many settlers to the West as the Northeastern states, and while the Northeast demanded free soil, the Southerners demanded not only free soil but the exclusion of Negroes from work and the franchise. They had a very vivid fear of the Negro as a competitor in labor, whether slave or free.

It was thus the presence of the poor white Southerner in the West that complicated the whole Free Soil movement in its relation to the labor movement. While the Western pioneer was an advocate of extreme democracy and equalitarianism in his political and economic philosophy, his vote and influence did not go to strengthen the abolition-democracy, before, during, or even after the war. On the contrary, it was stopped and inhibited by the doctrine of race, and the West, therefore, long stood against that democracy in industry which might have emancipated labor in the United States, because it did not admit to that democracy the American citizen of Negro descent.

Thus Northern workers were organizing and fighting industrial integration in order to gain higher wage and shorter hours, and more and more they saw economic salvation in the rich land of the West. A Western movement of white workers and pioneers began and was paralleled by a Western movement of planters and black workers in the South. Land and more land became the cry of the Southern political leader, with finally a growing demand for reopening of the African

slave trade. Land, more land, became the cry of the peasant farmer in the North. The two forces met in Kansas, and in Kansas civil war began.

The South was fighting for the protection and expansion of its agrarian feudalism. For the sheer existence of slavery, there must be a continual supply of fertile land, cheaper slaves, and such political power as would give the slave status full legal recognition and protection, and annihilate the free Negro. The Louisiana Purchase had furnished slaves and land, but most of the land was in the Northwest. The foray into Mexico had opened an empire, but the availability of this land was partly spoiled by the loss of California to free labor. This suggested a proposed expansion of slavery toward Kansas, where it involved the South in competition with white labor: a competition which endangered the slave status, encouraged slave revolt, and increased the possibility of fugitive slaves.

It was a war to determine how far industry in the United States should be carried on under a system where the capitalist owns not only the nation's raw material, not only the land, but also the laborer himself; or whether the laborer was going to maintain his personal freedom, and enforce it by growing political and economic independence based on widespread ownership of land.

This brings us down to the period of the Civil War. Up to the time that the war actually broke out, American labor simply refused, in the main, to envisage black labor as a part of its problem. Right up to the edge of the war, it was talking about the emancipation of white labor and the organization of stronger unions without saying a word, or apparently giving a thought, to four million black slaves. During the war, labor was resentful. Workers were forced to fight in a strife between capitalists in which they had no interest and they showed their resentment in the peculiarly human way of beating and murdering the innocent victims of it all, the black free Negroes of New York and other Northern cities; while in the South, five million non-slaveholding poor white farmers and laborers sent their manhood by the thousands to fight and die for a system that had degraded them equally with the black slave. Could one imagine anything more paradoxical than this whole situation?

America thus stepped forward in the first blossoming of the modern age and added to the Art of Beauty, gift of the Renaissance, and to Freedom of Belief, gift of Martin Luther and Leo X, a vision of democratic self-government: the domination of political life by the intelligent decision of free and self-sustaining men. What an idea and what an area for its realization—endless land of richest fertility, natural resources such as Earth seldom exhibited before, a population

infinite in variety, of universal gift, burned in the fires of poverty and caste, yearning toward the Unknown God; and self-reliant pioneers, unafraid of man or devil. It was the Supreme Adventure, in the last Great Battle of the West, for that human freedom which would release the human spirit from lower lust for mere meat, and set it free to dream and sing.

And then some unjust God leaned, laughing, over the ramparts of heaven and dropped a black man in the midst.

It transformed the world. It turned democracy back to Roman Imperialism and Fascism; it restored caste and oligarchy; it replaced freedom with slavery and withdrew the name of humanity from the vast majority of human beings.

But not without struggle. Not without writhing and rending of spirit and pitiable wail of lost souls. They said: Slavery was wrong but not all wrong; slavery must perish and not simply move; God made black men; God made slavery; the will of God be done; slavery to the glory of God and black men as his servants and ours; slavery as a way to freedom—the freedom of blacks, the freedom of whites; white freedom as the goal of the world and black slavery as the path thereto. Up with the white world, down with the black!

Then came this battle called Civil War, beginning in Kansas in 1854, and ending in the presidential election of 1876—twenty awful years. The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery. The whole weight of America was thrown to color caste. The colored world went down before England, France, Germany, Russia, Italy and America. A new slavery arose. The upward moving of white labor was betrayed into wars for profit based on color caste. Democracy died save in the hearts of black folk.

Indeed, the plight of the white working class throughout the world today is directly traceable to Negro slavery in America, on which modern commerce and industry was founded, and which persisted to threaten free labor until it was partially overthrown in 1863. The resulting color caste founded and retained by capitalism was adopted, forwarded and approved by white labor, and resulted in subordination of colored labor to white profits the world over. Thus the majority of the world's laborers, by the insistence of white labor, became the basis of a system of industry which ruined democracy and showed its perfect fruit in World War and Depression. And this book seeks to tell that story.

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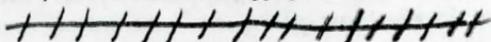
Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,  
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?

Or what is it ye buy so dear  
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps;  
The wealth ye find, another keeps;  
The robes ye weave, another wears;  
The arms ye forge, another bears.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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5. Schlüter, *Lincoln, Labor and Slavery*, p. 86.  
6. Simkins and Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction*, p. 326.  
7. Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, p. 404.  
8. Hart, *The Southern South*, pp. 34, 35.



## THE GENERAL STRIKE

The North started out with the idea of fighting the war without touching slavery. They faced the fact, after severe fighting, that Negroes seemed a valuable asset as laborers, and they therefore declared them "contraband of war." It was but a step from that to attract and induce Negro labor to help the Northern armies. Slaves were urged and invited into the Northern armies; they became military laborers and spies; not simply military laborers, but laborers on the plantations, where the crops went to help the Federal army or were sold North. Thus wherever Northern armies appeared, Negro laborers came, and the North found itself actually freeing slaves before it had the slightest intention of doing so, indeed when it had every intention not to.

The experience of the army with the refugees and the rise of the departments of Negro affairs were a most interesting, but unfortunately little studied, phase of Reconstruction. Yet it contained in a

sense the key to the understanding of the whole situation. At first, the rush of the Negroes from the plantations came as a surprise and was variously interpreted. The easiest thing to say was that Negroes were tired of work and wanted to live at the expense of the government; wanted to travel and see things and places. But in contradiction to this was the extent of the movement and the terrible suffering of the refugees. If they were seeking peace and quiet, they were much better off on the plantations than trailing in the footsteps of the army or squatting miserably in the camps. They were mistreated by the soldiers; ridiculed; driven away, and yet they came. They increased with every campaign, and as a final gesture, they marched with Sherman from Atlanta to the sea, and met the refugees and abandoned human property on the Sea Islands and the Carolina Coast.

This was not merely the desire to stop work. It was a strike on a wide basis against the conditions of work. It was a general strike that involved directly in the end perhaps a half million people. They wanted to stop the economy of the plantation system, and to do that they left the plantations. At first, the commanders were disposed to drive them away, or to give them quasi-freedom and let them do as they pleased with the nothing that they possessed. This did not work. Then the commanders organized relief and afterward, work. This came to the attention of the country first in Pierce's "Ten Thousand Clients." Pierce of Boston had worked with the refugees in Virginia under Butler, provided them with food and places to live, and given them jobs and land to cultivate. He was successful. He came from there, and, in conjunction with the Treasury Department, began the work on a vaster scale at Port Royal. Here he found the key to the situation. The Negroes were willing to work and did work, but they wanted land to work, and they wanted to see and own the results of their toil. It was here and in the West and the South that a new vista opened. Here was a chance to establish an agrarian democracy in the South: peasant holders of small properties, eager to work and raise crops, amenable to suggestion and general direction. All they needed was honesty in treatment, and education. Wherever these conditions were fulfilled, the result was little less than phenomenal. This was testified to by Pierce in the Carolinas, by Butler's agents in North Carolina, by the experiment of the Sea Islands, by Grant's department of Negro affairs under Eaton, and by Banks' direction of Negro labor in Louisiana. It is astonishing how this army of striking labor furnished in time 200,000 Federal soldiers whose evident ability to fight decided the war.

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The position of the Negro was strategic. His was the only appeal which would bring sympathy from Europe, despite strong economic bonds with the South, and prevent recognition of a Southern nation built on slavery. The free Negroes in the North, together with the Abolitionists, were clamoring. To them a war against the South simply had to be a war against slavery. Gradually, Abolitionists no longer need fear the mob. Disgruntled leaders of church and state began to talk of freedom. Slowly but surely an economic dispute and a political test of strength took on the aspects of a great moral crusade.

The Negro became in the first year contraband of war; that is, property belonging to the enemy and valuable to the invader. And in addition to that, he became, as the South quickly saw, the key to Southern resistance. Either these four million laborers remained quietly at work to raise food for the fighters, or the fighter starved. Simultaneously, when the dream of the North for man-power produced riots, the only additional troops that the North could depend on were 200,000 Negroes, for without them, as Lincoln said, the North could not have won the war.

But this slow, stubborn mutiny of the Negro slave was not merely a matter of 200,000 black soldiers and perhaps 300,000 other black laborers, servants, spies and helpers. Back of this half million stood 3½ million more. Without their labor the South would starve. With arms in their hands, Negroes would form a fighting force which could replace every single Northern white soldier fighting listlessly and against his will with a black man fighting for freedom.

This action of the slaves was followed by the disaffection of the poor whites. So long as the planters' war seemed successful, "there was little active opposition by the poorer whites; but the conscription and other burdens to support a slaveowners' war became very severe; the whites not interested in that cause became recalcitrant, some went into active opposition; and at last it was more desertion and disunion than anything else that brought about the final overthrow."<sup>17</sup>

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In August, Lincoln faced the truth, front forward; and that truth was not simply that Negroes ought to be free; it was that thousands of them were already free, and that either the power which slaves put into the hands of the South was to be taken from it, or the North could not win the war. Either the Negro was to be allowed to fight, or the draft itself would not bring enough white men into the army to keep up the war.

More than that, unless the North faced the world with the moral strength of declaring openly that they were fighting for the emancipation of slaves, they would probably find that the world would recognize the South as a separate nation; that ports would be opened; that trade would begin, and that despite all the military advantage of the North, the war would be lost.

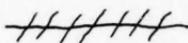
In August, 1862, Lincoln discussed Emancipation as a military measure; in September, he issued his preliminary proclamation; on January 1, 1863, he declared that the slaves of all persons in rebellion were "henceforward and forever free."

The guns at Sumter, the marching armies, the fugitive slaves, the fugitives as "contrabands," spies, servants and laborers; the Negro as soldier, as citizen, as voter—these steps came from 1861 to 1868 with regular beat that was almost rhythmic. It was the price of the disaster of war, and it was a price that few Americans at first dreamed of paying or wanted to pay. The North was not Abolitionist. It was overwhelmingly in favor of Negro slavery, so long as this did not interfere with Northern moneymaking. But, on the other hand, there was a minority of the North who hated slavery with perfect hatred; who wanted no union with slaveholders; who fought for freedom and treated Negroes as men. As the Abolition-democracy gained in prestige and in power, they appeared as prophets, and led by statesmen, they began to guide the nation out of the morass into which it had fallen. They and their black friends and the new freedmen became gradually the leaders of a Reconstruction of Democracy in the United States, while marching millions sang the noblest war-song of the ages to the tune of "John Brown's Body":

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Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,  
 He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored,  
 He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,  
 His Truth is marching on!

17. Campbell, *Black and White in the Southern States*, p. 165.



## THE COMING OF THE LORD

In the ears of the world, Abraham Lincoln on the first of January, 1863, declared four million slaves "thenceforward and forever free." The truth was less than this. The Emancipation Proclamation applied only to the slaves of those states or parts of states still in rebellion against the United States government. Hundreds of thousands of such slaves were already free by their own action and that of the invading armies, and in their cases, Lincoln's proclamation only added possible legal sanction to an accomplished fact.

To the majority of slaves still within the Confederate lines, the proclamation would apply only if they followed the fugitives. And this Abraham Lincoln determined to induce them to do, and thus to break the back of the rebellion by depriving the South of its principal labor force.

Emancipation had thus two ulterior objects. It was designed to make easier the replacement of unwilling Northern white soldiers with black soldiers; and it sought to put behind the war a new push toward Northern victory by the mighty impact of a great moral ideal, both in the North and in Europe.

This national right-about-face had been gradually and carefully accomplished only by the consummate tact of a leader of men who went no faster than his nation marched but just as fast; and also by the unwearying will of the Abolitionists, who forced the nation onward.

Wendell Phillips said in Washington in 1862:

"Gentlemen of Washington! You have spent for us two million dollars per day. You bury two regiments a month, two thousand men by disease without battle. You rob every laboring man of one-half of

his pay for the next thirty years by your taxes. You place the curse of intolerable taxation on every cradle for the next generation. What do you give us in return? What is the other side of the balance sheet? The North has poured out its blood and money like water; it has leveled every fence of constitutional privilege, and Abraham Lincoln sits today a more unlimited despot than the world knows this side of China. What does he render the North for this unbounded confidence? Show us something; or I tell you that within two years the indignant reaction of the people will hurl the cabinet in contempt from their seats, and the devils that went out from yonder capital, for there has been no sweeping or garnishing, will come back seven times stronger; for I do not believe that Jefferson Davis, driven down to the Gulf, will go down to the waters and perish as certain brutes mentioned in the Gospel did."

Horace Greeley was at Lincoln's heels. He wrote in August, 1862, his editorial, "Prayer of Twenty Millions," which drew Lincoln's well-known reply: "If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it would help to save the Union. . . ."

"Suppose I do that," said Lincoln to Greeley, discussing general emancipation. "There are now 20,000 of our muskets on the shoulders of Kentuckians who are bravely fighting our battles. Every one of them will be thrown down or carried over to the rebels."

"Let them do it," said Greeley. "The cause of the Union will be stronger if Kentucky should secede with the rest, than it is now."

In September, 1862, Lincoln said to representatives of the Chicago Protestants:

"I admit that slavery is at the root of the rebellion, or at least its *sine qua non*. . . . I will also concede that Emancipation would help us in Europe. . . . I grant, further, that it would help somewhat at the North, though not so much, I fear, as you and those you represent imagine. . . . And then, unquestionably, it would weaken the Rebels by drawing off their laborers, which is of great importance; but I am not so sure we could do much with the Blacks. If we were to arm them, I fear that in a few weeks the arms would be in the hands of the Rebels. . . ."

"What good would a proclamation of Emancipation from me do, especially as we are now situated? I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet. . . ." <sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, just nine days later, Lincoln issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. What caused the sudden change? Was it the mounting mass of Negroes rushing into Union lines? Was it the fighting of Negro soldiers which showed that weapons given to them were never found in the hands of Confederates, or was it the curious international situation?

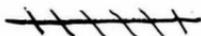
The failure or success of the war hung by a thread. If England and France should recognize the Confederacy, there was little doubt that the Union cause would be beaten; and they were disposed to recognize it. Or did Lincoln realize that since a draft law was needed to make unwilling Northern soldiers fight, black soldiers were the last refuge of the Union? The preliminary proclamation came in September, and in October and November mass meetings in New York and Brooklyn denounced the proposal as inexpedient and adopted resolutions against it with jeers. Ministers, like the Reverend Albert Barnes of Philadelphia, preached against emancipation, declaring that the control of slavery ought to be left absolutely and exclusively to the states. The New York *Herald* pointed out that even if the proclamation was effective, slave property would have to be restored or paid for eventually by the United States government. "The *Herald* is correct. The slaves taken from our citizens during the war have to be accounted for at its end, either by restoration or indemnity." <sup>2</sup> The New Orleans *Picayune* pointed out in November that abolition would flood the North with Negroes, and that this would "tend to degrade white labor and to cheapen it."

The final proclamation was issued January 1, 1863, and carried a special admonition to the colored people:

"And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

"And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

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



In the meantime, two fateful occurrences took place. First, the white workers of New York declared in effect that the Negroes were the cause of the war, and that they were tired of the discrimination that made workers fighters for the rich. They, therefore, killed all the Negroes that they could lay their hands on. On the other hand, in Louisiana and South Carolina, Negro soldiers were successfully used in pitched battle.

The opposition to the war in the North took various forms. There was the open sedition, led by Vallandigham and ending in the mass opposition of the working classes. This Copperhead movement was pro-slavery and pro-Southern, and was met in part by closer understanding and alliance between the Abolitionists and the Republican administration. But the working class movement was deeper and more difficult. It was the protest of the poor against being compelled to fight the battles of the rich in which they could conceive no interest of theirs. If the workers had been inspired by the sentiment against slavery which animated the English workers, results might have been different. But the Copperheads of the North, and the commercial interests of New York, in particular, were enabled to turn the just indignation of the workers against the Negro laborers, rather than against the capitalists; and against any war, even for emancipation.

When the draft law was passed in 1863, it meant that the war could no longer be carried on with volunteers; that soldiers were going to be compelled to fight, and these soldiers were going to be poor men who could not buy exemption. The result throughout the country was widespread disaffection that went often as far as rioting. More than 2,500 deserters from the Union army were returned to the ranks from Indianapolis alone during a single month in 1862; the total desertions in the North must have been several hundred thousands.

It was easy to transfer class hatred so that it fell upon the black worker. The end of war seemed far off, and the attempt to enforce the draft led particularly to disturbances in New York City, where a powerful part of the city press was not only against the draft, but against the war, and in favor of the South and Negro slavery.

The establishment of the draft undertaken July 13 in New York City met everywhere with resistance. Workingmen engaged in tearing down buildings were requested to give their names for the draft; they refused, and drove away the officers. The movement spread over the whole city. Mobs visited workshops and compelled the men to stop work. Firemen were prevented from putting out fires, telegraph wires were cut, and then at last the whole force of the riot turned against the Negroes. They were the cause of the war, and hence the cause of the draft. They were bidding for the same jobs as white men. They were underbidding white workers in order to keep themselves from starving. They were disliked especially by the Irish because of direct economic competition and difference in religion.

The Democratic press had advised the people that they were to be called upon to fight the battles of "niggers and Abolitionists"; Governor Seymour politely "requested" the rioters to await the return of his Adjutant-General, whom he had dispatched to Washington to ask the President to suspend the draft.

The report of the Merchants' Committee on the Draft Riot says of the Negroes: "Driven by the fear of death at the hands of the mob, who the week previous had, as you remember, brutally murdered by hanging on trees and lamp posts, several of their number, and cruelly beaten and robbed many others, burning and sacking their houses, and driving nearly all from the streets, alleys and docks upon which they had previously obtained an honest though humble living—these people had been forced to take refuge on Blackwell's Island, at police stations, on the outskirts of the city, in the swamps and woods back of Bergen, New Jersey, at Weeksville, and in the barns and out-houses of the farmers of Long Island and Morrisania. At these places were scattered some 5,000 homeless men, women and children."<sup>18</sup>

The whole demonstration became anti-Union and pro-slavery. Attacks were made on the residence of Horace Greeley, and cheers were heard for Jefferson Davis. The police fought it at first only half-heartedly and with sympathy, and finally, with brutality. Soldiers were summoned from Fort Hamilton, West Point and elsewhere.

The property loss was put at \$1,200,000, and it was estimated that between four hundred and a thousand people were killed. When a thousand troops under General Wool took charge of the city, thirteen rioters were killed, eighteen wounded, and twenty-four made prisoners. Four days the riot lasted, and the city appropriated \$2,500,000 to indemnify the victims.

In many other places, riots took place, although they did not become so specifically race riots. They did, however, show the North that unless they could replace unwilling white soldiers with black soldiers, who had a vital stake in the outcome of the war, the war could not be won.

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## LOOKING BACKWARD

The poor whites, on the other hand, were absolutely at sea. The Negro was to become apparently their fellow laborer. But were the whites to be bound to the black laborer by economic condition and destiny, or rather to the white planter by community of blood? Almost unanimously, following the reaction of such leaders as Andrew Johnson and Hinton Helper, the poor white clung frantically to the planter and his ideals; and although ignorant and impoverished, maimed and discouraged, victims of a war fought largely by the poor white for the benefit of the rich planter, they sought redress by demanding unity of white against black, and not unity of poor against rich, or of worker against exploiter.

This brought singular schism in the South. The white planter endeavored to keep the Negro at work for his own profit on terms that amounted to slavery and which were hardly distinguishable from it. This was the plain voice of the slave codes. On the other hand, the only conceivable ambition of a poor white was to become a planter. Meantime the poor white did not want the Negro put to profitable work. He wanted the Negro beneath the feet of the white worker.

Right here had lain the seat of the trouble before the war. All the regular and profitable jobs went to Negroes, and the poor whites were

excluded. It seemed after the war immaterial to the poor white that profit from the exploitation of black labor continued to go to the planter. He regarded the process as the exploitation of black folk by white, not of labor by capital. When, then, he faced the possibility of being himself compelled to compete with a Negro wage worker, while both were the hirelings of a white planter, his whole soul revolted. He turned, therefore, from war service to guerrilla warfare, particularly against Negroes. He joined eagerly secret organizations, like the Ku Klux Klan, which fed his vanity by making him co-worker with the white planter, and gave him a chance to maintain his race superiority by killing and intimidating "niggers"; and even in secret forays of his own, he could drive away the planter's black help, leaving the land open to white labor. Or he could murder too successful freedmen.

It was only when they saw the Negro with a vote in his hand, backed by the power and money of the nation, that the poor whites who followed some of the planters into the ranks of the "scalawags" began to conceive of an economic solidarity between white and black workers. In this interval they received at the hands of the black voter and his allies a more general right to vote, to hold office and to receive education, privileges which the planter had always denied them. But before all this was so established as to be intelligently recognized, armed revolt in the South became organized by the planters with the cooperation of the mass of poor whites. Taking advantage of an industrial crisis which throttled both democracy and industry in the North, this combination drove the Negro back toward slavery. Finally the poor whites joined the sons of the planters and disfranchised the black laborer, thus nullifying the labor movement in the South for a half century and more.

As the Civil War staggered toward its end, the country began to realize that it was not only at the end of an era, but it was facing the beginning of a vaster and more important cycle. The emancipation of four million slaves might end slavery, but would it not also be the end of its four million victims? To be sure there were many prophets, South and North, who foretold this fate of Negro extinction, but they were wrong. It was the beginning of Negro development, and what was this development going to be?

Back of all the enthusiasm and fervor of victory in the North came a wave of reflection that represented the sober after-thought of the nation. It harked back to a time when not one person in ten believed in Negroes, or in emancipation, or in any attempt to conquer the South. This feeling began to arise before the war closed, and after it ended it rose higher and higher into something like dismay. From

before the time of Washington and Jefferson down to the Civil War, the nation had asked if it were possible for free Negroes to become American citizens in the full sense of the word.

The answers to this problem, historically, had taken these forms:

1. Negroes, after conversion to Christianity, were in the same position as other colonial subjects of the British King. This attitude disappeared early in colonial history.

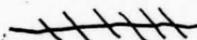
2. When the slave trade was stopped, Negroes would die out. Therefore, the attack upon slavery must begin with the abolition of the slave trade and after that the race problem would settle itself. This attitude was back of the slave trade laws, 1808-20.

3. If Negroes did not die out, and if gradually by emancipation and the economic failure of slavery they became free, they must be systematically deported out of the country, back to Africa or elsewhere, where they would develop into an independent people or die from laziness or disease. This represented the attitude of liberal America from the end of the War of 1812 down to the beginning of the Cotton Kingdom.

4. Negroes were destined to be perpetual slaves in a new economy which recognized a caste of slave workers. And this caste system might eventually displace the white worker. At any rate, it was destined to wider expansion toward the tropics. This was the attitude of the Confederacy.

It is clear that from the time of Washington and Jefferson down to the Civil War, when the nation was asked if it was possible for free Negroes to become American citizens in the full sense of the word, it answered by a stern and determined "No!" The persons who conceived of the Negroes as free and remaining in the United States were a small minority before 1861, and confined to educated free Negroes and some of the Abolitionists.

This basic thought of the American nation now began gradually to be changed. It bore the face of fear. It showed a certain dismay at the thought of what the nation was facing after the war and under hypnotism of a philanthropic idea. The very joy in the shout of emancipated Negroes was a threat. Who were these people? Were we not loosing a sort of gorilla into American freedom? Negroes were lazy, poor and ignorant. Moreover their ignorance was more than the ignorance of whites. It was a biological, fundamental and ineradicable ignorance based on pronounced and eternal racial differences. The democracy and freedom open and possible to white men of English stock, and even to Continental Europeans, were unthinkable in the case of Africans. We were moving slowly in an absolutely impossible direction



The whole proof of what the South proposed to do to the emancipated Negro, unless restrained by the nation, was shown in the Black Codes passed after Johnson's accession, but representing the logical result of attitudes of mind existing when Lincoln still lived. Some of these were passed and enforced. Some were passed and afterward repealed or modified when the reaction of the North was realized. In other cases, as for instance, in Louisiana, it is not clear just which laws were retained and which were repealed. In Alabama, the Governor induced the legislature not to enact some parts of the proposed code which they overwhelmingly favored.

The original codes favored by the Southern legislatures were an astonishing affront to emancipation and dealt with vagrancy, apprenticeship, labor contracts, migration, civil and legal rights. In all cases, there was plain and indisputable attempt on the part of the Southern states to make Negroes slaves in everything but name. They were given certain civil rights: the right to hold property, to sue and be sued. The family relations for the first time were legally recognized. Negroes were no longer real estate.

Yet, in the face of this, the Black Codes were deliberately designed to take advantage of every misfortune of the Negro. Negroes were liable to a slave trade under the guise of vagrancy and apprenticeship laws; to make the best labor contracts, Negroes must leave the old plantations and seek better terms; but if caught wandering in search of work, and thus unemployed and without a home, this was vagrancy, and the victim could be whipped and sold into slavery. In the turmoil of war, children were separated from parents, or parents unable to support them properly. These children could be sold into slavery, and "the former owner of said minors shall have the preference." Negroes could come into court as witnesses only in cases in which Negroes were involved. And even then, they must make their appeal to a jury and judge who would believe the word of any white man in preference to that of any Negro on pain of losing office and caste.

The Negro's access to the land was hindered and limited; his right to work was curtailed; his right of self-defense was taken away, when his right to bear arms was stopped; and his employment was virtually reduced to contract labor with penal servitude as a punishment for leaving his job. And in all cases, the judges of the Negro's guilt or innocence, rights and obligations were men who believed firmly, for the most part, that he had "no rights which a white man was bound to respect."

Making every allowance for the excitement and turmoil of war, and the mentality of a defeated people, the Black Codes were infamous pieces of legislation.

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## A POOR WHITE

Now, early in 1865, the war is over. The North does not especially want free Negroes; it wants trade and wealth. The South does not want a particular interpretation of the Constitution. It wants cheap Negro labor and the political and social power based on it. Had there been no Negroes, there would have been no war. Had no Negroes survived the war, peace would have been difficult because of hatred, loss and bitter grief. But its logical path would have been straight.

The South would have returned to its place in Congress with less than its former representation because of the growing North and West. These areas of growing manufacture and agriculture, railroad building and corporations, would have held the political power over the South until the South united with the new insurgency of the West or the old Eastern democratic ideals. Industrialization might even have brought a third party representing labor and raised the proletariat to dominance.

Of this, in 1865 there were only vague signs, and in any case, the former Southern aristocracy would not easily have allied itself with immigrant labor, while the Southern poor whites would have needed long experience and teaching. Thus, the North in the absence of the Negro would have had a vast debt, a problem of charity, distress and relief, such reasonable amnesty as would prevent the old Southern leaders from returning immediately to power, the recognition of the reorganized states, and then work and forgetting.

"Let us have peace." But there was the black man looming like a dark ghost on the horizon. He was the child of force and greed, and the father of wealth and war. His labor was indispensable, and the loss of it would have cost many times the cost of the war. If the Negro had been silent, his very presence would have announced his plight. He was not silent. He was in unusual evidence. He was writing petitions, making speeches, parading with returned soldiers, reciting his adventures as slave and freeman. Even dumb and still, he must be noticed. His poverty had to be relieved, and emancipation in his case had to mean poverty. If he had to work, he had to have land and tools. If his labor was in reality to be free labor, he had to have legal freedom and civil rights. His ignorance could only be removed by that very education which the law of the South had long denied him

and the custom of the North had made exceedingly difficult. Thus civil status and legal freedom, food, clothes and tools, access to land and help to education, were the minimum demands of four million laborers, and these demands no man could ignore, Northerner or Southerner, Abolitionist or Copperhead, laborer or captain of industry. How did the nation face this paradox and dilemma?

Led by Abraham Lincoln, the nation had looked back to the status before the war in order to find a path to which the new nation and the new condition of the freedmen could be guided. Only one forward step President Lincoln insisted upon and that was the real continued freedom of the emancipated slave; but the abolition-democracy went beyond this because it was convinced that here was no logical stopping place; and it looked forward to civil and political rights, education and land, as the only complete guarantee of freedom, in the face of a dominant South which hoped from the first, to abolish slavery only in name.

In the North, a new and tremendous dictatorship of capital was arising. There was only one way to curb and direct what promised to become the greatest plutocratic government which the world had ever known. This way was first to implement public opinion by the weapon of universal suffrage—a weapon which the nation already had in part, but which had been virtually impotent in the South because of slavery, and which was at least weakened in the North by the disfranchisement of an unending mass of foreign-born laborers. Once universal suffrage was achieved, the next step was to use it with such intelligence and power that it would function in the interest of the mass of working men.

To accomplish this end there should have been in the country and represented in Congress a union between the champions of universal suffrage and the rights of the freedmen, together with the leaders of labor, the small landholders of the West, and logically, the poor whites of the South. Against these would have been arrayed the Northern industrial oligarchy, and eventually, when they were re-admitted to Congress, the representatives of the former Southern oligarchy.

This union of democratic forces never took place. On the contrary, they were torn apart by artificial lines of division. The old anti-Negro labor rivalry between white and black workers kept the labor elements after the war from ever really uniting in a demand to increase labor power by Negro suffrage and Negro economic stability. The West was seduced from a vision of peasant-proprietors, recruited from a laboring class, into a vision of labor-exploiting farmers and land speculation which tended to transform the Western farmers into a petty bourgeoisie fighting not to overcome but to share spoils with the large

land speculators, the monopolists of transportation, and the financiers. Wherever a liberal and democratic party started to differentiate itself from this group, the only alliance offered was the broken oligarchy of the South, with its determination to reenslave Negro labor.

The effective combination which ensued was both curious and contradictory. The masters of industry, the financiers and monopolists, had in self-defense to join with abolition-democracy in forcing universal suffrage on the South, or submit to the reassertion of the old land-slave feudalism with increased political power.

Such a situation demanded an economic guardianship of freedmen, and the first step to this meant at least the beginning of a dictatorship by labor. This, however, had to be but temporary union and was bound to break up before long. The break was begun by the extraordinary corruption, graft and theft that became more and more evident in the country from 1868 on, as a result of the wild idea that industry and progress for the people of the United States were compatible with the selfish sequestration of profit for private individuals and powerful corporations.

But those who revolted from the party of exploitation and high finance did not see allies in the dictatorship of labor in the South. Rather they were entirely misled by the complaint of property from the Southern oligarchy. They failed to become a real party of economic reform and became a reaction of small property-holders against corporations; of a petty bourgeoisie against a new economic monarchy. They immediately joined Big Business in coming to an understanding with the South in 1876, so that by force and fraud the South overthrew the dictatorship of the workers.

But this was only the immediate cause. If there had been no widespread political corruption, North and South, there would still have arisen an absolute difference between those who were trying to conduct the new Southern state governments in the interest of the mass of laborers, black and white, and those North and South who were determined to exploit labor, both in agriculture and industry, for the benefit of an oligarchy. Such an oligarchy was in effect back of the military dictatorship which supported these very Southern labor governments, and which had to support them either as laborers or by developing among them a capitalist class. But as soon as there was understanding between the Southern exploiter of labor and the Northern exploiter, this military support would be withdrawn; and the labor governments, in spite of what they had accomplished for the education of the masses, and in spite of the movements against waste and graft which they had inaugurated, would fail. Under such circum-

stances, they had to fail, and in a large sense the immediate hope of American democracy failed with them.

Let us now follow this development more in detail. In 1863 and 1864, Abraham Lincoln had made his tentative proposals for reconstructing the South. He had left many things unsaid. The loyal-minded, consisting of as few as one-tenth of the voters whom Lincoln proposed to regard as a state, must naturally, to survive, be supported by the United States Army, until a majority of the inhabitants acquiesced in the new arrangements. It was Lincoln's fond hope that this acquiescence might be swift and clear, but no one knew better than he that it might not.

He was careful to say that Congress would certainly have voice as to the terms on which they would recognize the newly elected Senators and Representatives. This proposal met the general approval of the country, but Congress saw danger and enacted the Wade-Davis Bill. This did not recognize Negro suffrage, and was not radically different from the Lincoln plan, except that the final power and assent of Congress were more prominently set forth.

Lincoln did not oppose it. He simply did not want his hands permanently tied. The bill failed, leaving Lincoln making a careful study of the situation, and promising another statement. He was going forward carefully, hoping for some liberal movement to show itself in the South, and delicately urging it. In the election of 1864, the country stood squarely back of him. The Northern democracy carried only New Jersey, Delaware and Kentucky. But he died, and Andrew Johnson took his place.

Thus, suddenly, April 15, 1865, Andrew Johnson found himself President of the United States, six days after Lee's surrender, and a month and a half after the 38th Congress had adjourned, March 3.

It was the drear destiny of the Poor White South that, deserting its economic class and itself, it became the instrument by which democracy in the nation was done to death, race provincialism deified, and the world delivered to plutocracy. The man who led the way with unconscious paradox and contradiction was Andrew Johnson.

Lately the early life and character of Andrew Johnson have been abundantly studied. He was a fanatical hater of aristocracy. "Through every public act of his runs one consistent, unifying thread of purpose—the advancement of the power, prosperity and liberty of the masses at the expense of intrenched privilege. The slaveholding aristocracy he hated with a bitter, enduring hatred born of envy and ambition. 'If Johnson were a snake,' said his rival, the well-born Isham G. Harris, 'he would lie in the grass to bite the heels of the rich men's

children.' The very thought of an aristocrat caused him to emit venom and lash about him in fury."<sup>1</sup>

His political methods were those of the barn-storming demagogue.

"Johnson's speeches were tissues of misstatement, misrepresentation, and insulting personalities, directed to the passions and unreasoning impulses of the ignorant voters; assaults upon aristocrats combined with vaunting of his own low origin and the dignity of manual labor."<sup>2</sup> Yet a biographer says that Johnson was "the only President who practiced what he preached, drawing no distinction between rich and poor, or high and low. . . .

"Do not these facts furnish an explanation of Johnson's life? Do they not show why he had the courage to go up against caste and cheap aristocracy, why he dared to stand for the under-dog, whether Catholic, Hebrew, foreigner, mechanic, or child; and to cling like death to the old flag and the Union? . . .

"'Gladly I would lay down my life,' he wrote, 'if I could so engraft democracy into our general government that it would be permanent.'"<sup>3</sup>

To all this there is one great qualification. Andrew Johnson could not include Negroes in any conceivable democracy. He tried to, but as a poor white, steeped in the limitations, prejudices, and ambitions of his social class, he could not; and this is the key to his career.

Johnson sat in Congress from 1843 to 1853, and was Senator from 1857 to 1862. He favored the annexation of Texas as a gateway for Negro emigration. He was against a high tariff, championed free Western lands for white labor, and favored the annexation of Cuba for black slave labor.

McConnell introduced a homestead bill into Congress in January, 1846. Johnson's bill came in March. He returned to Tennessee as Governor, but induced the legislature to instruct members of Congress to vote for his bill. The bill finally passed the House but was defeated in the Senate, and this was repeated for several sessions. Meantime, Johnson found himself in curious company. He was linked on the one hand to the Free Soilers, and in 1851 went to New York to address a Land Reform Association. On the other hand, the South called him socialistic and Wigfall of Texas dubbed him: "The vilest of Republicans, the reddest of Reds, a sans-culotte, for four years past he has been trying to please the North with his Homestead and other bills."<sup>4</sup> The Abolitionists meanwhile looked askance because Johnson favored the bill for annexing Cuba.

He voted against the Pacific railroad, owned eight slaves and said at one time: "You won't get rid of the Negro except by holding him in slavery."<sup>5</sup> In the midst of such vacillation and contradiction, small

wonder that Lane referred to Johnson's "triumphant ignorance and exulting stupidity." Yet Johnson hewed doggedly to certain lines. In 1860, he was advocating his homestead bill again. It finally passed both House and Senate, but Buchanan vetoed it as unconstitutional. Johnson called the message "monstrous and absurd." At last, in June, 1862, after the South had withdrawn from Congress, Johnson's bill was passed and Lincoln signed it.

Yet it was this same Johnson who said in the 36th Congress that if the Abolitionists freed the slaves and let them loose on the South, "the non-slaveholder would join with the slave-owner and extirpate them," and "if one should be more ready to join than another it would be myself."

Johnson early became a follower of Hinton Helper and used his figures. *The Impending Crisis* was "Andrew Johnson's vade mecum—his arsenal of facts."<sup>6</sup>

Johnson made two violent speeches against secession in 1860-61, with bitter personalities against Jefferson Davis, Judah Benjamin and their fellows. He called them rebels and traitors; the galleries yelled and the presiding officers threatened to clear them. Johnson shouted: "I would have them arrested, and if convicted, within the meaning and scope of the Constitution, by the Eternal God, I would execute them; Sir, treason must be punished; its enormity and the extent and depth of the offense must be made known!"

Clingman of North Carolina said that Johnson's speech brought on the Civil War. Alexander Stephens said that it solidified the North. Letters came in to congratulate and to encourage "the only Union Senator from the South." Labor rallied to him. A Baltimore laborer wrote that "the poor working man will no doubt be called on to fight the battles of the rich." From Memphis another wrote: "It was labor that achieved our independence and the laborers are ready to maintain it." The New York Working Man's Association passed a resolution of thanks.<sup>7</sup>

Lincoln set about winning Tennessee, and as a step toward it, asked Andrew Johnson to go and act as Military Governor, and restore the state. Johnson resigned from the Senate and went to Tennessee early in March, 1862. He arrived in Nashville March 12, and took possession of the State House. His courage and sacrifice eventually redeemed the state and restored it to the Union.

Several times Johnson spoke on slavery and the Negro. When he asked that plantations be divided in the South and lands opened in the West, he had in mind white men, who would thus become rich or at least richer. But for Negroes, he had nothing of the sort in mind,

except the bare possibility that, if given freedom, they might continue to exist and not die out.

Johnson said in January, 1864, at Nashville in reply to a question as to whether he was in favor of emancipation:

"As for the Negro I am for setting him free but at the same time I assert that this is a white man's government. . . . If whites and blacks can't get along together arrangements must be made to colonize the blacks. . . . In 1843, when I was candidate for Governor, it was said, 'That fellow Johnson is a demagogue, is an Abolitionist.' . . . Because I advocated a white basis for representation—apportioning members of Congress according to the number of qualified voters, instead of embracing Negroes, they called me an Abolitionist. . . . What do we find today? Right goes forward; truth triumphs; justice is supreme; and slavery goes down.

"In fact, the Negroes are emancipated in Tennessee today, and the only remaining question for us to settle, as prudent and wise men, is in assigning the Negro his new relation. Now, what will that be? The Negro will be thrown upon society, governed by the same laws that govern communities, and be compelled to fall back upon his own resources, as all other human beings are. . . . Political freedom means liberty to work, and at the same time enjoy the products of one's labor. . . . If he can rise by his own energies, in the name of God, let him rise. In saying this, I do not argue that the Negro race is equal to the Anglo-Saxon. . . . If the Negro is better fitted for the inferior condition of society, the laws of nature will assign him there!"<sup>8</sup>

As a reward for Johnson's services and to unite the sections Lincoln chose Johnson as his running mate in 1864. Before the campaign June 10, from the St. Cloud Hotel, Johnson gave his philosophy of Reconstruction:

"One of the chief elements of this rebellion is the opposition of the slave aristocracy to being ruled by men who have risen from the ranks of the people. This aristocracy hated Mr. Lincoln because he was of humble origin, a rail-splitter in early life. One of them, the private secretary of Howell Cobb, said to me one day, after a long conversation, 'We people of the South will not submit to be governed by a man who has come up from the ranks of the common people, as Abe Lincoln has.' He uttered the essential feeling and spirit of this Southern rebellion. Now it has just occurred to me, if this aristocracy is so violently opposed to being governed by Mr. Lincoln, what in the name of conscience will it do with Lincoln and Johnson? . . .

"I am for emancipation for two reasons: First, because it is right in itself; and second, because in the emancipation of the slaves, we break

down an odious and dangerous aristocracy; I think that we are freeing more whites than blacks in Tennessee.

"I want to see slavery broken up, and when its barriers are torn down, I want to see industrious, thrifty immigrants pouring in from all parts of the country. Come on! we need your labor, your skill, your capital. . . .

"Ah, these Rebel leaders have a strong personal reason for holding out—to save their necks from the halter. And these leaders must feel the power of the government. Treason must be made odious, and the traitor must be punished and impoverished. Their great plantations must be seized and divided into small farms, and sold to honest, industrious men. The day for protecting the lands and Negroes of these authors of rebellion is past. It is high time it was."<sup>9</sup>

During the campaign he addressed a torchlight procession of thousands of Negroes and whites. He said, October, 1864:

"Who has not heard of the great estates of Mack Cockrill, situated near this city, estates whose acres are numbered by the thousand, whose slaves were once counted by the score? And of Mack Cockrill, their possessor, the great slave-owner and, of course, the leading rebel, who lives in the very wantonness of wealth, wrung from the sweat and toil and stolen wages of others, and who gave fabulous sums to aid Jeff Davis in overturning this Government? . . .

"Who has not heard of the princely estates of General W. D. Harding, who, by means of his property alone, outweighed in influence any other man in Tennessee, no matter what were that other's worth, or wisdom, or ability. Harding, too, early espoused the cause of treason and made it his boast that he had contributed, and directly induced others to contribute, millions of dollars in aid of that unholy cause. . . . It is wrong that Mack Cockrill and W. D. Harding, by means of forced and unpaid labor, should have monopolized so large a share of the lands and wealth of Tennessee; and I say if their immense plantations were divided up and parceled out amongst a number of free, industrious, and honest farmers, it would give more good citizens to the Commonwealth, increase the wages of our mechanics, enrich the markets of our city, enliven all the arteries of trade, improve society, and conduce to the greatness and glory of the State.

"The representatives of this corrupt, and if you will permit me almost to swear a little, this damnable aristocracy, taunt us with our desire to see justice done, and charge us with favoring Negro equality. Of all living men they should be the last to mouth that phrase; and, even when uttered in their hearing, it should cause their cheeks to tinge and burn with shame. Negro equality, indeed! Why, pass any day along the sidewalks of High Street where these aristocrats more

particularly dwell—these aristocrats, whose sons are now in the bands of guerillas and cut-throats who prowl and rob and murder around our city—pass by their dwellings, I say, and you will see as many mulatto as Negro children, the former bearing an unmistakable resemblance to their aristocratic owners. . . . Thank God, the war has ended all this . . . a war that has freed more whites than blacks. . . . Suppose the Negro is set free and we have less cotton, we will raise more wool, hemp, flax and silk. . . . It is all an idea that the world can't get along without cotton. And, as is suggested by my friend behind me, whether we attain perfection in the raising of cotton or not, I think we ought to stimulate the cultivation of hemp (great and renewed laughter); for we ought to have more of it and a far better material, a stronger fiber, with which to make a stronger rope. For, not to be malicious or malignant, I am free to say that I believe many who were driven into this Rebellion, are repentant; but I say of the leaders, the instigators, the conscious, intelligent traitors, they ought to be hung.”<sup>10</sup>

“Looking at this vast crowd of colored people,’ continued the Governor, ‘and reflecting through what a storm of persecution and obloquy they are compelled to pass, I am almost induced to wish that, as in the days of old, a Moses might arise who should lead them safely to their promised land of freedom and happiness.’

“‘You are our Moses,’ shouted several voices, and the exclamation was caught up and cheered until the Capitol rung again. . . .

“‘Well, then,’ replied the speaker, ‘humble and unworthy as I am, if no other better shall be found, I will indeed be your Moses, and lead you through the Red Sea of war and bondage to a fairer future of liberty and peace. I speak now as one who feels the world his country, and all who love equal rights his friends. I speak, too, as a citizen of Tennessee. I am here on my own soil; and here I mean to stay and fight this great battle of truth and justice to a triumphant end. Rebellion and slavery shall, by God's good help, no longer pollute our State. Loyal men, whether white or black, shall alone control her destinies; and when this strife in which we are all engaged is past, I trust, I know, we shall have a better state of things, and shall all rejoice that honest labor reaps the fruit of its own industry, and that every man has a fair chance in the race of life.’”<sup>11</sup>

Winston interpreted the latter part of this speech as directed to the whites, when clearly he was speaking directly to the colored people; but he was afterward unwilling to live up to its promises. As a matter of fact, he favored emancipation “in order to save the Union and to free the white man and no further. ‘Damn the Negroes,’ he once said

when charged with race equality. 'I am fighting those traitorous aristocrats, their masters.'"<sup>12</sup>

Johnson appeared to take the oath of office as Vice-President so drunk he was taken into prolonged seclusion after a maudlin speech; his resignation was discussed. He was not a habitual drunkard, although he drank "three or four glasses of Robertson's Canada Whiskey" some days. In 1848 Johnson writes that he had been "on a kind of bust—not a big drunk."<sup>13</sup> Both of Johnson's sons became drunkards and were cut off before they reached middle life. Yet Lincoln was right:

"Oh, well, don't you bother about Andy Johnson's drinking. He made a bad slip the other day, but I have known Andy a great many years, and he ain't no drunkard." Johnson was deeply humiliated by the inauguration episode and perhaps here began his alienation from those who might have influenced him best.

Charles A. Dana, Assistant Secretary of War, says that he met Vice-President Johnson in Richmond. "He took me aside and spoke with great earnestness about the necessity of not taking the Confederates back without some conditions or without some punishment. He insisted that their sins had been enormous, and that if they were let back into the Union without any punishment the effect would be very bad. He said they might be very dangerous in the future. The Vice-President talked to me in this strain for fully twenty minutes, I should think—an impassioned, earnest speech on the subject of punishing rebels."<sup>14</sup>

His sudden induction as President was marked by modesty and genuine feeling. Carl Schurz says that the inaugural speech of Andrew Johnson, in 1865, was very pleasing to the liberals of the North, and made them believe that he was going to allow the Negro to have some part in the reconstruction of the states.

For a month after coming to the Presidency, Johnson indulged in speech-making, and his words were still so severe that the anti-slavery people became uneasy, feeling that Johnson would give his attention primarily to punishing the whites rather than protecting the Negroes. April 21, 1865, he said in an interview with some citizens of Indiana:

"They [the Rebel leaders] must not only be punished, but their social power must be destroyed. . . . And I say that, after making treason odious, every Union man and the government should be remunerated out of the pockets of those who have inflicted this great suffering upon the country." This was exactly the thesis of Thaddeus Stevens enunciated in September of the same year.

A number of Virginians visited Johnson in July and complained that they were seeking credits in the North and West, but could get

no consideration while they remained under the ban of the government. The President replied: "It was the wealthy men who dragooned the people into secession; I know how this thing was done. You rich men used the press and bullied your little men to force the state into secession." He spoke as a poor white for poor whites and the planters left in gloom."

He kept on insisting upon punishment for the South, and not only personal punishment but economic punishment, so that many conservatives were afraid that they had elected to the Presidency a radical who would seriously attack the South.

This would have been true but for one thing: the Southern poor white had his attitude toward property and income seriously modified by the presence of the Negro. Even Abraham Lincoln was unable for a long time to conceive of free, poor, black citizens as voters in the United States. The problem of the Negroes, as he faced it, worried him, and he made repeated efforts to see if in some way they could not be sent off to Africa or to foreign lands. Johnson had no such broad outlook. Negroes to him were just Negroes, and even as he expressed his radical ideas of helping the poor Southerners, he seldom envisaged Negroes as a part of the poor.

Lincoln came to know Negroes personally. He came to recognize their manhood. He praised them generously as soldiers, and suggested that they be admitted to the ballot. Johnson, on the contrary, could never regard Negroes as men. "He has all the narrowness and ignorance of a certain class of whites who have always looked upon the colored race as out of the pale of humanity."<sup>15</sup>

The Northern press had been quite satisfied with Lincoln's attitude. He had served liberty and America well. "Lincoln," said Senator Doolittle, representing industry in the West, "would have dealt with the Rebels as an indulgent father deals with his erring children. Johnson would deal with them more like a stern and incorruptible judge. Thus in a moment has the scepter of power passed from the hand of flesh to the hand of iron."

At a cabinet meeting with Mr. Lincoln on the last day of his life, Friday, April 14, Stanton submitted the draft of a plan for the restoration of governments in the South. The draft applied expressly to two states, but was intended as a model for others. The President suggested a revision, and the subject was postponed until Tuesday the 18th.

Andrew Johnson became President, and on Sunday, April 16, Stanton read his draft to Sumner and other gentlemen. Sumner interrupted the reading with the inquiry: "'Whether any provision was made for enfranchising the colored men,' saying, also, that 'unless the black man

is given the right to vote his freedom is a mockery.' Stanton deprecated the agitation of the subject . . . but Sumner insisted that the black man's right to vote was 'the essence—the great essential.' Stanton's draft, now confined to North Carolina, was considered in the Cabinet May 9, when it appeared with a provision for suffrage in the election of members of a constitutional convention for the State. It included 'the loyal citizens of the United States.' This paragraph, it appears, Stanton had accepted April 16, as an amendment from Sumner and Colfax. . . . He admitted that it was intended to include Negroes as well as white men."<sup>16</sup>

Stanton invited an expression of opinion; several members of the Cabinet were absent. Stanton, Dennison and Speed favored the inclusion; McCulloch, Welles and Usher were against it. The President expressed no opinion, but Sumner was certain of the President's decision in favor of Negro suffrage.

Sumner sought to keep close to Johnson. He and Chase had an interview with him a week after he had taken the oath of office. Johnson was reserved but sympathetic and they left light-hearted. A few days later, when the President and Senator Sumner were alone together, the President said: "'On this question [that of suffrage] there is no difference between us; you and I are alike.' Sumner expressed his joy and gratitude that the President had taken this position, and that as a consequence there would thus be no division in the Union party; and the President replied, 'I mean to keep you all together.' As he walked away that evening, Sumner felt that the battle of his own life was ended."<sup>17</sup>

He wrote to Bright, May 1, 1865, encouragingly: "Last evening, I had a long conversation with him [Johnson], mainly on the rebel states and how they shall be tranquillized. Of course my theme is justice to the colored race. He accepted this idea completely, and indeed went so far as to say 'that there is no difference between us.' You understand that the question whether rebel states shall be treated as military provinces or territories is simply one of form, with a view to the great result. It is the result that I aim at! and I shall never stickle on any intermediate question if that is secured. He deprecates haste; is unwilling that states should be precipitated back; thinks there must be a period of probation, but that meanwhile all loyal people, without distinction of color, must be treated as citizens, and must take part in any proceedings for reorganization. He doubts at present the expediency of announcing this from Washington lest it should give a handle to party, but is willing it should be made known to the people in the rebel states. The Chief Justice started yesterday on a visit to North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and New Orleans, and will on his

way touch the necessary strings, so far as he can. I anticipate much from this journey. His opinions are fixed, and he is well informed with regard to those of the President. I would not be too sanguine, but I should not be surprised if we had this great question settled before the next meeting of Congress—I mean by this that we had such expression of opinion and acts as will forever conclude it. My confidence is founded in part upon the essential justice of our aims and the necessity of the case. With the President as well disposed as he shows himself, and the Chief Justice as positive, we must prevail. Will not all this sanctify our war beyond any in history?"

The next day writing to Lieber, Sumner quoted Johnson as saying that "colored persons are to have the right to suffrage; that no state can be precipitated into the Union; that rebel states must go through a term of probation. All this he had said to me before. Ten days ago, the Chief Justice and myself visited him in the evening to speak of these things. I was charmed by his sympathy, which was entirely different from his predecessor's. The Chief Justice is authorized to say wherever he is what the President desires, and to do everything he can to promote organization without distinction of color. The President desires that the movement should appear to proceed from the people. This is in conformity with his general ideas; but he thinks it will disarm the party at home. I told him that while I doubted if the work could be effectively done without federal authority, I regarded the *modus operandi* as an inferior question; and that I should be content, provided equality before the law was secured for all without distinction of color. I said during this winter that the rebel states could not come back, except on the footing of the Declaration of Independence, and the complete recognition of human rights. I feel more than ever confident that all this will be fulfilled. And then what a regenerated land! I had looked for a bitter contest on this question; but with the President on our side, it will be carried by simple avoirdupois."

Chase wrote Johnson from South Carolina the same month: "Suffrage to loyal blacks; I find that readiness and even desire for it is in proportion to the loyalty of those who express opinions. Nobody dis-sents, vehemently; while those who have suffered from rebellion and rejoice with their whole hearts in the restoration of the National Authority, are fast coming to the conclusion they will find their own surest safety in the proposed extension. . . .

"All seem embarrassed about first steps. I do not entertain the slightest doubt that they would all welcome some simple recommendation from yourself, and would adopt readily any plan which you would suggest. . . .

"I am anxious that *you* should have the lead in this work. It is my

deliberate judgment that nothing will so strengthen you with the people or bring so much honor to your name throughout the world as some such short address as I suggested before leaving Washington. Just say to the people: 'Reorganize your state governments. I will aid you in the enrollment of the loyal citizens; you will not expect me to discriminate among men equally loyal; once enrolled, vote for delegates to the Convention to reform your State Constitution. I will aid you in collecting and declaring their suffrages. Your convention and yourselves must do the rest; but you may count on the support of the National Government in all things constitutionally expedient.'"<sup>18</sup>

In April and May of 1866, Tennessee had confined the right to vote to whites. The Tennessee Senate refused a suffrage bill which allowed all blacks and whites of legal age to vote, but excluded after 1875 all who could not read. Sumner wanted Johnson to insist on Negro suffrage in Tennessee, but Johnson explained that if he were in Tennessee he would take a stand, but that he could not in Washington.

Sumner remained in Washington half through May and saw the President almost daily, always seizing opportunity to present his views on Reconstruction, and insisting on suffrage for Negroes.

Just before leaving Washington, Sumner had a final interview with the President. He found him cordial and apparently unchanged. Sumner apologized for repeating his views expressed before. Johnson said, with a smile, "Have I not always listened to you?" Sumner, as he left, "assured his friends and correspondents that the cause he had at heart was safe" with Andrew Johnson.<sup>19</sup>

Disturbing signs, however, began to occur. Carl Schurz wrote in May concerning the plans of Southern leaders in Mississippi, Georgia and North Carolina. Thaddeus Stevens was alarmed at the President's recognition of the Pierpont government of Virginia. A caucus was, therefore, called at the National Hotel at Washington, May 12, to prevent the administration from going completely astray. Wade and Sumner said the President was in no danger, and that he was in favor of Negro suffrage.

Sumner may have been over-sanguine and read into Johnson's words more than Johnson intended, but it is certain that Sumner received a definite understanding that President Johnson stood for real emancipation and Negro suffrage.

Here then was Andrew Johnson in 1865, born at the bottom of society, and during his early life a radical defender of the poor, the landless and the exploited. In the heyday of his early political career, he railed against land monopoly in the South, and after the Civil War, wanted the land of the monopolists divided among peasant proprietors.

Suddenly, by the weird magic of history, he becomes military dictator of a nation. He becomes the man by whom the greatest moral and economic revolution that ever took place in the United States, and perhaps in modern times, was to be put into effect. He becomes the real emancipator of four millions of black slaves, who have suffered more than anything that he had experienced in his earlier days. They not only have no lands; they have not owned even their bodies, nor their clothes, nor their tools. They have been exploited down to the ownership of their own families; they have been poor by law, and ignorant by force. What more splendid opportunity could the champion of labor and the exploited have had to start a nation towards freedom?

Johnson took over Lincoln's cabinet with an Anti-Abolitionist Whig, a Pro-Slavery Democrat, and a liberal student of industry, among others. This cabinet lasted a little over a year when early in July, 1866, three members, Dennison, Harlan and Speed, resigned, being unwilling to oppose Congress.

In all their logical sequence, the Reconstruction policies now associated with Johnson's name were laid down by Seward, and his logic overwhelmed Johnson. As Stevens explained: "Seward entered into him, and ever since they have been running down steep places into the sea."

The Cabinet met at Seward's house May 9, and on May 29, Johnson issued a Proclamation of Amnesty which showed the Seward influence. Indeed, nothing was left, apparently, of Johnson's liberalism, except the exclusion from amnesty, not simply of the leaders of the Confederacy, but of the rich—those worth \$20,000 or more. Seward opposed this, but it was the only thing that he yielded to Johnson's liberalism. He early convinced Johnson that Reconstruction was a matter for the President to settle and especially he opened the door to his thorough conversion when the power of further pardons was put into Johnson's hand.

"Seward, who had remained secretary after Lincoln's death, had used all the powers of his persuasive eloquence to satisfy President Johnson that all now to be done was simply to restore the Union by at once re-admitting the 'States lately in rebellion' to their full constitutional functions as regular States of the Union, and that then, being encouraged by this mark of confidence, the late master class in the South could be trusted with the recognition and protection of the emancipated slaves. That Mr. Seward urged such advice upon the President, there is good reason for believing. Not only was it common report, but it accorded also strikingly with Mr. Seward's singular turn of mind concerning the slavery question. As after the outbreak of the secession movement he peremptorily relegated the slavery question to

the background in spite of its evident importance in the Civil War and of the influence it would inevitably exercise upon the opinion and attitude of foreign nations, so he may have been forgetful of the national duty of honor to secure the rights of the freedmen and the safety of the Southern Union men in his impatient desire to 'restore the Union' in point of form." <sup>20</sup>

Johnson was transformed. From the champion of peasant labor, he saw himself as the restorer of national unity, and the benefactor

almsgiver to those very elements in the South which had formerly despised him. Of his real rôle as emancipator, and the one who was to give effective freedom to Negroes, he still had not the slightest idea. He could not conceive of Negroes as men. And equally, he had no adequate idea of the industrial transformation that was going on in the North. There were, of course, the inevitable scars of the war: the loss of a million men and twelve billion dollars in property; eventual pensions and indirect losses; the revolution in Southern agriculture; the universal lowering of ethical standards which always follows war. The West was uneasy on account of taxes, debt and the money situation. In New York and Boston, men engaged in foreign commerce wanted speedy restoration of the South and a reduction in the tariff to increase their business. These complicated threads varied and changed as time went on. But when the 39th Congress met, the war business boom was still on; failures had disappeared; prices had increased. Wealth was being concentrated among the manufacturers, merchants, financiers and speculators. There were great amounts of waiting capital and all of these interests wanted the war stopped, and the South restored.

Sumner had not left Washington ten days before his hopes for a just reconstruction on the basis of Negro suffrage were killed by the President's proclamation.

Johnson's plan of reconstruction included the abolition of slavery, the repudiation of war debts, the nullification of secession ordinances, and the appointment of provisional governors to help in the reconstruction of civil government. Only those white folks who could take the loyal oath would take part in this reconstruction. In other words, this was practically Lincoln's plan and it was also the Wade-Davis plan, save that there was no open or expressed recognition of any power or function of Congress except as judging the legality of elections. Johnson did not eventually even admit, as Lincoln apparently had agreed, that Congress was final judge as to whether these states could hold legal elections.

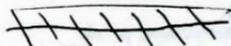
Congress had adjourned before Lee's surrender, and it was widely believed that had Lincoln lived, a special session would have been

summoned. The Seward-Johnson compromise proposed not to call Congress. In one way, the decision was shrewd. It gave the administration nine months to carry out its policy, and if the policy was successful, Congress would, when it met, be faced by a *fait accompli*, a nation at peace, a South restored with slavery abolished. What more could the nation want?

On the other hand, the attempt was full of risk. Already the power of the Executive had gone far beyond the dreams of living men. It must be curbed sooner or later. The military dictatorship which had carried on the war must, as soon as possible after the war, be tempered by democracy. The attempt to do even what the nation wanted without this was foolish. An attempt to override the will of the nation was suicidal, and yet that was precisely what Seward and Johnson eventually attempted. May 29, the Declaration of Amnesty was issued; and that same month, Provisional Governors were appointed for North Carolina and Mississippi. In June, Georgia, Texas, Alabama and South Carolina were given Governors, and in July, Florida. Thus, three months after the assassination of Lincoln, Reconstruction was in operation; the Union party divided in opinion; the Northern Democrats encouraged, and the South particularly encouraged.

The South thereupon turned its attention on Johnson and brought to bear a second influence next in power to Seward's and in the end exceeding it. Southern leaders descended upon the President; not simply the former slave barons but new representatives of the poor whites. In less than nine months after the Proclamation of Amnesty, 14,000 prominent persons are said to have received pardons from the President.

No wonder the attitude of Johnson towards the South and the leaders of the rebellion was transformed. The very inferiority complex which made him hate the white planter concealed a secret admiration for his arrogance and address. Carl Schurz was coldly received when he returned from the Southern trip which Johnson had urged upon him.



The transubstantiation of Andrew Johnson was complete. He had begun as the champion of the poor laborer, demanding that the land monopoly of the Southern oligarchy be broken up, so as to give access to the soil, South and West, to the free laborer. He had demanded the punishment of those Southerners who by slavery and war had made such an economic program impossible. Suddenly thrust into the Presidency, he had retreated from this attitude. He had not only given up extravagant ideas of punishment, but he dropped his demand for dividing up plantations when he realized that Negroes would largely be beneficiaries. Because he could not conceive of Negroes as men, he refused to advocate universal democracy, of which, in his young manhood, he had been the fiercest advocate, and made strong alliance with those who would restore slavery under another name.

This change did not come by deliberate thought or conscious desire to hurt—it was rather the tragedy of American prejudice made flesh; so that the man born to narrow circumstances, a rebel against economic privilege, died with the conventional ambition of a poor white to be the associate and benefactor of monopolists, planters and slave drivers. In some respects, Andrew Johnson is the most pitiful figure of American history. A man who, despite great power and great ideas, became a puppet, played upon by mighty fingers and selfish, subtle minds; groping, self-made, unlettered and alone; drunk, not so much with liquor, as with the heady wine of sudden and accidental success.

My wild soul waited on as falcons hover.  
I beat the reedy fens as I trampled past.  
I heard the mournful loon  
In the marsh beneath the moon  
And then, with feathery thunder, the bird of my desire  
Broke from the cover  
Flashing silver fire.  
High up among the stars I saw his pinions spire.  
The pale clouds gazed aghast  
As my falcon dropped upon him, and gript and held him fast.

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

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1. Hall, C. A., *Andrew Johnson*, p. 22.
  2. Hall, C. A., *Andrew Johnson*, p. 21.
  3. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, pp. xiv, xvi, 24, 25.
  4. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 172; *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 1354.
  5. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 118.
  6. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 108.
  7. Hall, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 27; Moore, *Speeches of Andrew Johnson*, p. 294.
  8. Hall, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 117; Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 252
  9. McPherson, *History of United States During Reconstruction*, pp. 46, 47.
  10. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, pp. 228, 229.
  11. Moore, *Speeches of Andrew Johnson*, p. xli.
  12. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, pp. 260, 261.
  13. Winston, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 515.
  14. Warmoth, *War, Politics and Reconstruction*, p. 26.
  15. Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, IV, p. 276.
  16. Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, IV, p. 244.
  17. Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, IV, pp. 242-243, 245.
  18. Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction* (Chase to Johnson), Vol. I, pp. 142, 143.
  19. Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner*, IV, p. 246.
  20. Schurz, *Reminiscences*, III, pp. 202, 203.

## COUNTER-REVOLUTION OF PROPERTY

The panic of 1873 changed, too, the history of the South. Already, in 1870, the Republicans had lost their two-thirds majority in Congress, and in 1874, for the first time in twenty years, the Democrats had a majority in the House of Representatives. They looked forward confidently to controlling the nation in 1876.

Even in the face of catastrophe, the North had moral courage and the spirit of faith among large numbers of its best citizens. The history of abolition is full proof of this. But Sacrifice must build on Faith. A saving nucleus of the North believed in the Negro from experience and study—but this same class had lost faith in democratic methods in the North. The experience with the Irish in Massachusetts and New York, misgovernment, crime and dirt in the great industrial cities, were attributed to the laboring masses. How could they rightly exercise the power to rule? New England lost faith in democracy and cherished something like a race hatred for the Irish. Her Puritan past kept her just—she gave them schools, she refused discriminatory laws in religion; but she doubted; and even if she knew the end was mass rule, it was a long, long, bitter way, and a crisis was already here.

The system of capital and private profit smashed in 1873, and all property and investment were in dire danger; labor was at the edge of starvation, and democracy and universal suffrage could function only through revolution. But a new savior appeared. Already Industry had been undergoing a process of integration, alliance and imperial domination. Instead of lawless freebooters, there were appearing a few strong purposeful kings with vast power of finance and technique in their hands. They promised law and order; they promised safe income on a sure property base with neither speculative bubbles nor criminal aggression. In other words a new Empire of Industry was offering to displace capitalistic anarchy and form a dictatorship of capital to guide and repress universal suffrage.

The conquest of the new industry in the ranks of labor was quick and certain. The growth of the National Labor Union into a labor party along Marxist lines, which had been developing from the close of the war, began to become petty bourgeois. It began to fight for capital and interest and the right of the upper class of labor to share in the exploitation of common labor. The Negro as a common laborer belonged, therefore, not in but beneath the white American labor movement.

Craft and race unions spread. The better-paid skilled and intelligent American labor formed itself into closed guilds and, in combination with capitalist guild-masters, extorted fair wages which could

be raised by negotiation. Foreign-born and Negro labor was left outside and tried several times, but in vain, to start a class-conscious labor movement. Skilled labor proceeded to share in the exploitation of the reservoir of low-paid common labor, and no strikes nor violence by over-crowded competing beggars for subsistence could move the industrial machine so long as engineers and skilled labor kept it going. To be sure the skilled labor guilds and capital had bitter disputes and even open fighting, but they fought to share profit from labor and not to eliminate profit.

Big business with high-salaried engineers, well-paid skilled labor and a mass of voiceless common labor then offered terms to the nation. Profiteering, graft and theft had run wild in the North under the extreme individualism of post-war industry. Northern business had protected its monopoly by high tariff, profit from investments in railroad and government bonds, and new ventures. It had held its political power by the Fourteenth Amendment and Reconstruction Acts. But its dominion and advance were threatened by loss of all moral standards, cut-throat competition; political revolt threatened, which might result in lowering the tariff, attacking the banking and money system, and strengthening government control of business freedom. One way to forestall this was to effect inner control and coordination of business by centralizing the control of the power of capital, regaining the confidence of investors by sure and steady income, and driving from power the irregular banditti and highwaymen of industry.

Fortunately for them, the panic of 1873 checked the reform movement of 1872, and delivered the country into the power of the great financiers without seriously breaking the power of capital. Reform became liberal, attacking theft and graft, and calling for freedom of the South from military control. Thus, the radical revolution of controlling capital and forcing recognition of the rights of labor by government control was lost sight of. Labor war ensued in the North, and serfdom was established in the South.

But what of the South in this development? The planters had expected Negro governments to fall in confusion at the very beginning of the attempted dictatorship of labor. This did not happen.

Writing in the *American Historical Review* I said, "In legislation covering property, the wider functions of the state, the punishment of crime and the like, it is sufficient to say that the laws on these points established by Reconstruction legislatures were not only different from and even revolutionary to the laws in the older South, but they were so wise and so well suited to the needs of the new South that in spite of a retrogressive movement following the overthrow of the Negro

governments the mass of this legislation, with elaboration and development, still stands on the statute books of the South.

"Reconstruction constitutions, practically unaltered, were kept in

Florida .....	1868-1885 .....	17 years
Virginia .....	1870-1902 .....	32 years
South Carolina .....	1868-1895 .....	27 years
Mississippi .....	1868-1890 .....	22 years

"Even in the case of states like Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, and Louisiana, which adopted new constitutions to signify the overthrow of Negro rule, the new constitutions are nearer the model of the Reconstruction document than they are to the previous constitutions. They differ from the Negro constitutions in minor details but very little in general conception.

"Besides this there stands on the statute books of the South today law after law passed between 1868 and 1876, and which has been found wise, effective, and worthy of preservation."<sup>14</sup>

This compels us to begin with the fact that the basic difficulty with the South after the war was poverty, a depth of grinding poverty not easily conceivable even in these days of depression. In the first place, it goes without saying that the emancipated slave was poor; he was desperately poor, and poor in a way that we do not easily grasp today. He was, and always had been, without money and, except for his work in the Union Army, had no way of getting hold of cash. He could ordinarily get no labor contract that involved regular or certain payments of cash. He was without clothes and without a home. He had no way to rent or build a home. Food had to be begged or stolen, unless in some way he could get hold of land or go to work; and hired labor would, if he did not exercise the greatest care and get honest advice, result in something that was practically slavery. These conditions, of course, while true for the mass of freedmen, did not apply to workers in the army, artisans or laborers in cities and others who had exceptional chances to obtain work for cash at something like decent rates.

The white worker, in the mass, was equally poverty-stricken, except that he did usually hold, as a squatter, some land, and Emancipation gave him better chance to hire his labor in cities. Finally, there were the impoverished planters, merchants and professional men who came out of the war with greatly reduced income and resources. In this setting of poverty, as nearly universal as one could have under modern conditions, must come the effort to set up a new state, and it is clear to the unprejudiced observer that no matter who had conducted that state, if there had been no Negro or other alien elements in the land,

if there had been no universal suffrage, there would have been bitter dissatisfaction, widespread injustice, and vast transfer of wealth involving stealing and corruption.

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God wept; but that mattered little to an unbelieving age; what mattered most was that the world wept and still is weeping and blind with tears and blood. For there began to rise in America in 1876 a new capitalism and a new enslavement of labor. Home labor in cultured lands, appeased and misled by a ballot whose power the dictatorship of vast capital strictly curtailed, was bribed by high wage and political office to unite in an exploitation of white, yellow, brown and black labor, in lesser lands and "breeds without the law." Especially workers of the New World, folks who were American and for whom America was, became ashamed of their destiny. Sons of ditch-diggers aspired to be spawn of bastard kings and thieving aristocrats rather than of rough-handed children of dirt and toil. The immense profit from this new exploitation and world-wide commerce enabled a guild of millionaires to engage the greatest engineers, the wisest men of science, as well as pay high wage to the more intelligent labor and at the same time to have left enough surplus to make more thorough the dictatorship of capital over the state and over the popular vote, not only in Europe and America but in Asia and Africa.

The world wept because within the exploiting group of New World masters, greed and jealousy became so fierce that they fought for trade and markets and materials and slaves all over the world until at last in 1914 the world flamed in war. The fantastic structure fell, leaving grotesque Profits and Poverty, Plenty and Starvation, Empire and Democracy, staring at each other across World Depression. And the rebuilding, whether it comes now or a century later, will and must go back to the basic principles of Reconstruction in the United States during 1867-1876—Land, Light and Leading for slaves black, brown, yellow and white, under a dictatorship of the proletariat.

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Profit? What profit hath the sea  
 Of her deep-throated threnody?  
 What profit hath the sun, who stands  
 Staring on space with idle hands?  
 And what should God Himself acquire  
 From all the æons' blood and fire?

FANNIE STEARNS DAVIS

From *Crack o' Dawn*, The Macmillan Company

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Meantime, a new power appeared upon the scene, or rather an old power of government paralyzed by the Civil War began to re-assert itself, and effectively stopped Northern Federal dictatorship to enforce democracy in the South. This was the Supreme Court. Johnson had had no chance to make appointments to the Supreme Court, although he had long relied upon that court to overthrow Reconstruction. The court, however, hesitated before overwhelming public opinion.

In 1870, Northern Big Business designated two railroad and corporation lawyers from Pennsylvania and New York for appointment. It was charged that they were purposely put on the bench in order to reverse the Legal Tender decision, and protect the bondholders in collecting at par debts contracted when paper money was at a discount of 30% to 60%. At any rate, they, together with one other appointment made in 1872-1874, changed the complexion of the Supreme Court, and when Waite was appointed Chief Justice, over the protest of Charles Sumner, the reconstructed court was ready for the appeals concerning the laws to enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

It is significant that the very center of Northern capitalistic power, which protected and buttressed the new monopoly of Big Business, turned, and with the same gesture freed land and capital in the South from any fear of control by black and white labor.

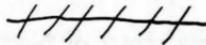
Cases on appeal reached that tribunal in 1876. Reverdy Johnson, Henry Stanbery, and others had striven to bring this to pass. They relied upon the court to do what Democratic members of Congress had failed to accomplish—and the court, through a process of reasoning very similar to that of Democratic legislators, deprived the enforcement legislation of nearly all its strength when it rendered its decisions in the cases of *United States vs. Reese* and *United States vs. Cruikshank*:

"The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution does not confer the right of suffrage," the court concluded in the first case. "The power of Congress to legislate at all upon the subject of voting at state elections rests upon this Amendment and can be exercised by providing a punishment only when the wrongful refusal to receive the vote of a qualified elector at such election is because of his race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

In the *Cruikshank* case, the court declared that "The right of suffrage is not a necessary attribute of national citizenship; but that exemption from discrimination in the exercise of that right on account of race, etc., is. The right to vote in the States comes from the States; but the right of exemption from the prohibited discrimination comes

from the United States. The first has not been granted or secured by the Constitution of the United States; but the last has been. . . . The Fourteenth Amendment prohibits a state from denying to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws, but this provision does not, any more than the one which preceded it, . . . add anything to the rights which one citizen has under the Constitution against another. The equality of the rights of citizens is a principle of republicanism. Every republican government is in duty bound to protect all its citizens in the enjoyment of this privilege if within its power. That duty was originally assumed by the state, and it still remains there. The only obligation resting upon the United States is to see that the states do not deny the right. This the amendment guarantees, but no more. The power of the national government is limited to the enforcement of the rights guaranteed." <sup>37a</sup>

Both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were thus made innocuous so far as the Negro was concerned, and the Fourteenth Amendment in particular became the chief refuge and bulwark of corporations. It was thus that finance and the power of wealth accomplished through the Supreme Court what it had not been able to do successfully through Congress.



The political success of the doctrine of racial separation, which overthrew Reconstruction by uniting the planter and the poor white, was far exceeded by its astonishing economic results. The theory of laboring class unity rests upon the assumption that laborers, despite internal jealousies, will unite because of their opposition to exploitation by the capitalists. According to this, even after a part of the poor white laboring class became identified with the planters, and eventually displaced them, their interests would be diametrically opposed to those of the mass of white labor, and of course to those of the black laborers. This would throw white and black labor into one class, and precipitate a united fight for higher wage and better working conditions.

Most persons do not realize how far this failed to work in the South, and it failed to work because the theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest.

It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials. and while

this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them. White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule.

On the other hand, in the same way, the Negro was subject to public insult; was afraid of mobs; was liable to the jibes of children and the unreasoning fears of white women; and was compelled almost continuously to submit to various badges of inferiority. The result of this was that the wages of both classes could be kept low, the whites fearing to be supplanted by Negro labor, the Negroes always being threatened by the substitution of white labor.

Mob violence and lynching were the inevitable result of the attitude of these two classes and for a time were a sort of permissible Roman holiday for the entertainment of vicious whites. One can see for these reasons why labor organizers and labor agitators made such small headway in the South. They were, for the most part, appealing to laborers who would rather have low wages upon which they could eke out an existence than see colored labor with a decent wage. White labor saw in every advance of Negroes a threat to their racial prerogatives, so that in many districts Negroes were afraid to build decent homes or dress well, or own carriages, bicycles or automobiles, because of possible retaliation on the part of the whites.

Thus every problem of labor advance in the South was skillfully turned by demagogues into a matter of inter-racial jealousy. Perhaps the most conspicuous proof of this was the Atlanta riot in 1906, which followed Hoke Smith's vicious attempt to become United States Senator on a platform which first attacked corporations and then was suddenly twisted into scandalous traducing of the Negro race.

To this day no casual and unsophisticated reader of the white Southern press could possibly gather that the American Negro masses were anything but degraded, ignorant, inefficient examples of an incurably inferior race.

The result of all this had to be unfortunate for the Negro. He was a caged human being, driven into a curious mental provincialism. An inferiority complex dominated him. He did not believe himself a man like other men. He could not teach his children self-respect. The Negro as a group gradually lost his manners, his courtesy, his light-hearted kindness. Large numbers sank into apathy and fatalism! There was no chance for the black man; there was no use in striving; ambition was not for Negroes.

The effect of caste on the moral integrity of the Negro race in America has thus been widely disastrous; servility and fawning, gross flattery of white folk and lying to appease and cajole them; failure to achieve dignity and self-respect and moral self-assertion, personal cowardliness and submission to insult and aggression; exaggerated and despicable humility; lack of faith of Negroes in themselves and in other Negroes and in all colored folk; inordinate admiration for the stigmata of success among white folk: wealth and arrogance, cunning dishonesty and assumptions of superiority; the exaltation of laziness and indifference as just as successful as the industry and striving which invites taxation and oppression; dull apathy and cynicism; faith in no future and the habit of moving and wandering in search of justice; a religion of prayer and submission to replace determination and effort.

These are not universal results or else the Negro long since would have dwindled and died in crime and disease. But they are so widespread as to bring inner conflict as baffling as the problems of interracial relations, and they hold back the moral grit and organized effort which are the only hope of survival.

On this and in spite of this comes an extraordinary record of accomplishment, a record so contradictory of what one might easily expect that many people and even the Negroes themselves are deceived by it. The real question is not so much what the Negro has done in spite of caste, as what he might have accomplished with reasonable encouragement. He has cut down his illiteracy more than two-thirds in fifty years, but with decent schools it ought to have been cut down 99 per cent. He has accumulated land and property, but has not been able to hold one-tenth of that which he has rightly earned. He has achieved success in many lines, as an inventor, scientist, scholar and writer. But most of his ability has been choked in chain-gangs and by open deliberate discrimination and conspiracies of silence. He has made a place for himself in literature and art, but the great deeps of his artistic gifts have never yet been plumbed. And yet, for all that he has accomplished, not only the nation but the South itself claims credit and actually points to it as proof of the wisdom or at least the innocuousness of organized suppression!

It is but human experience to find that the complete suppression of a race is impossible. Despite inner discouragement and submission to the oppression of others there persisted the mighty spirit, the emotional rebound that kept a vast number struggling for its rights, for self-expression, and for social uplift. Such men, in many cases, became targets for the white race. They were denounced as trouble makers.

They were denied opportunity. They were driven from their homes. They were lynched.

It is doubtful if there is another group of twelve million people in the midst of a modern cultured land who are so widely inhibited and mentally confined as the American Negro. Within the colored race the philosophy of salvation has by the pressure of caste been curiously twisted and distorted. Shall they use the torch and dynamite? Shall they go North, or fight it out in the South? Shall they segregate themselves even more than they are now, in states, towns, cities or sections? Shall they leave the country? Are they Americans or foreigners? Shall they stand and sing "My Country 'Tis of Thee"? Shall they marry and rear children and save and buy homes, or deliberately commit race suicide?

Ordinarily such questions within a group settle themselves by laboratory experiment. It is shown that violence does not pay, that quiet persistent effort wins; bitterness and pessimism prove a handicap. And yet in the case of the Negro it is almost impossible to obtain such definite laboratory results. Failure cannot be attributed to individual neglect, and success does not necessarily follow individual effort. It is impossible to disentangle the results of caste and the results of work and striving. Ordinarily a group experiments—tries now this, now that, measures results and eliminates bad advice and unwise action by achieving success. But here success is so curtailed and frustrated that guiding wisdom fails. Why should we save? What good does it do to be upstanding, with self-respect? Who gains by thrift, or rises by education?

Such mental frustration cannot indefinitely continue. Some day it may burst in fire and blood. Who will be to blame? And where the greater cost? Black folk, after all, have little to lose, but Civilization has all.

This the American black man knows: his fight here is a fight to the finish. Either he dies or wins. If he wins it will be by no subterfuge or evasion of amalgamation. He will enter modern civilization here in America as a black man on terms of perfect and unlimited equality with any white man, or he will enter not at all. Either extermination root and branch, or absolute equality. There can be no compromise. This is the last great battle of the West.

Evil results of the revolution of 1876 have not been confined to Negroes. The reaction on the whites was just as significant. The white people of the South are essentially a fine kindly breed, the same sort of human beings that one finds the world over. Perhaps their early and fatal mistake was when they refused long before the Civil War to allow in the South differences of opinion. They would not let honest white Southerners continue to talk against slavery. They drove out the non-

conformist; they would not listen to the radical. The result was that there has been built up in the South an intolerance fatal to human culture. Men act as they do in the South, they murder, they lynch, they insult, because they listen to but one side of a question. They seldom know by real human contact Negroes who are men. They read books that laud the South and the "Lost Cause," but they are childish and furious when criticized, and interpret all criticism as personal attack.

The result is that the South in the main is ranged against liberalism. No liberal movement in the United States or in the world has been able to make advance among Southerners. They are militaristic and will have nothing to do with a peace movement. Young Southerners eagerly crowd West Point and Annapolis. The South is not interested in freedom for dark India. It has no sympathy with the oppressed of Africa or of Asia. It is for the most part against unions and the labor movement, because there can be no real labor movement in the South; their laboring class is cut in two and the white laborers must be ranged upon the side of their own exploiters by persistent propaganda and police force. Labor can gain in the South no class-consciousness. Strikes cannot be effective because the white striker can be threatened with the colored "scab" and the colored striker can be clapped in jail.

The result of the disfranchisement of the Negro on the political life of the South has been pitiful. Southerners argued that if the Negro was disfranchised, normal political life would be possible for the South. They did not realize that a living working class can never lose its political power and that all they did in 1876 was to transfer that political power from the hands of labor to the hands of capital, where it has been concentrated ever since. Moreover, after that transfer the forms of republican government became a continuing farce.

As Chamberlain said: "Every present citizen of South Carolina knows, and those who are truthful and frank will confess that the ballot debauched in 1876 remains debauched; the violence taught them remains now, if not in the same, in other forms; the defiance of law learned then in what was called a good cause survives in the horrid orgies of degradation and of lynchings."<sup>43</sup>

There can be no doubt that the revolution of 1876 established fraud and oligarchy in the South and the remains of that régime are still with us. Local government in the South to this day is handicapped and frustrated by caste and by the use of the color line to divide the electorate and dominate the Negro. As late as 1931, the *Atlanta Constitution* said of the Georgia legislature: "Never in its history has Georgia been inflicted with so incompetent a legislature as the one just adjourned."

George W. Cable said in 1885: "The vote, after all, was a secondary point, and the robbery and bribery on one side, and whipping and killing on the other were but huge accidents of the situation. The two main questions were really these: on the freedman's side, how to establish republican state government under the same recognition of his rights that the rest of Christendom accorded him; and on the former master's side, how to get back to the old semblance of republican state government, and—allowing that the freedman was de facto a voter—still to maintain a purely arbitrary superiority of all whites over all blacks, and a purely arbitrary equality of all blacks among themselves as an alien, menial and dangerous class.

"Exceptionally here and there someone in the master caste did throw off the old and accept the new ideas, and, if he would allow it, was instantly claimed as a leader by the newly liberated thousands around him. But just as promptly the old master race branded him also an alien reprobate, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, if he had not already done so, he soon began to confirm by his actions the brand of his cheek."

The paradox of this whole muddle is that what the South started to do in 1876 was never accomplished and never will be. The Negro cannot be disfranchised. He votes in every policy and the only result of disfranchisement is to bind the white South hand and foot and deliver it to its own worst self. Stevens and Sumner stand eternally vindicated.

Particularly has the South suffered spiritually by the effort to use propaganda and enforce belief. This always results in deliberate lying. Not that all white Southerners deliberately lie about the Negro, but to an astonishing degree the honest South allows known lies to stand uncontradicted.

The wide distortion of facts which became prevalent in the white South during and after Reconstruction as a measure of self-defense has never been wholly crushed since. For years Southerners denied that there was any fraud and cheating in elections. Henry Grady stood in Boston and told New England that the Negro was as free to vote in the South as the white laborer was in the North. Booker T. Washington repeatedly testified as to the good will and essential honesty of purpose of Southerners and put the whole burden of responsibility for advance upon the Negro himself. "The Southern white man is the Negro's best friend," scream all the Southern papers, even today. And this in the face of the open record of five thousand lynchings, jails bursting with black prisoners incarcerated on trivial and trumped-up charges, and caste staring from every train and street car.

This whole phantasmagoria has been built on the most miserable

of human fictions: that in addition to the manifest differences between men there is a deep, awful and ineradicable cleft which condemns most men to eternal degradation. It is a cheap inheritance of the world's infancy, unworthy of grown folk. My rise does not involve your fall. No superior has interest in inferiority. Humanity is one and its vast variety is its glory and not its condemnation. If all men make the best of themselves, if all men have the chance to meet and know each other, the result is the love born of knowledge and not the hate based on ignorance.

The result of this upon the higher life in the South is extraordinary. Fundamentalism rules in religion because men hesitate openly to reason about the Golden Rule. Literature, art and music are curiously dominated by the Negro. The only literature the South has had for years is based largely upon the Negro. Southern music is Negro music. Yet Negroes themselves are seldom recognized as interpreters of art, and white artists must work under severe social limitations and at second hand; they thus lack necessary sincerity, depth and frankness.

Democracy in the South and in the United States is hampered by the Southern attitude. The Southerner, by winning the victory which the Fourteenth Amendment tried to deny, uses the Negro population as a basis of his political representation and allows few Negroes to vote; so that the white Southerner marches to the polls with many times as much voting power in his hand as the voter in the North.

The South does and must vote for reaction. There can be, therefore, neither in the South nor in the nation a successful third party movement. This was proven in the case of Theodore Roosevelt and LaFollette. A solid bloc of reaction in the South can always be depended upon to unite with Northern conservatism to elect a president.

One can only say to all this that whatever the South gained through its victory in the revolution of 1876 has been paid for at a price which literally staggers humanity. Imperialism, the exploitation of colored labor throughout the world, thrives upon the approval of the United States, and the United States gives that approval because of the South. World war waits on and supports imperial aggression and international jealousy. This was too great a price to pay for anything which the South gained.

The chief obstacle in this rich realm of the United States, endowed with every natural resource and with the abilities of a hundred different peoples—the chief and only obstacle to the coming of that kingdom of economic equality which is the only logical end of work is the determination of the white world to keep the black world poor and themselves rich. A clear vision of a world without inordinate

individual wealth, of capital without profit and of income based on work alone, is the path out, not only for America but for all men. Across this path stands the South with flaming sword.

Of course, it would be humanly impossible for any such régime to be completely successful anywhere without protest and reaction from within. Alms-giving to Negroes in the South has always been almost universal. Even petty pilfering has been winked at. Beyond this, and of far greater social significance, have been the personal friendships between blacks and whites with aid and advice, even at great pecuniary and spiritual costs. Large-hearted Southern white men and women have in unnumbered cases quietly and without advertisement done enormous work to make life bearable and success possible for thousands of Negroes.

Most of the benevolence of this sort, however, has been of a personal and individual matter. In only a minority of cases have such Southern white people been willing to stand on principle and demand for all Negroes rights as men and treatment according to desert. When in some cases such opinion and clear advocacy has been made and has consequently evoked the usual social punishment, it is singular and almost peculiar to the South how seldom Southern whites have had the courage to stand up and suffer for righteousness' sake against the mass terror of public opinion.

In the South the iconoclast, the martyr, not only on the Negro question, but on other moral matters, have been conspicuously absent; and where they have arisen, they have soon either subsided into silence or retreated to the more tolerant atmosphere of the North, leaving the South all the poorer and all the more easily hammered into conformity with the mob.

If white and black in the South were free and intelligent there would be friendship and some intermarriage and there ought to be; but none would marry where he did not wish to, and there could be no greater intermingling in the future than in the shameful past, unless this union of races proved successful and attractive.

The revolution of 1876 was, in fine, a victory for which the South has every right to hang its head. After enslaving the Negro for two and one-half centuries, it turned on his emancipation to beat a beaten man, to trade in slaves, and to kill the defenseless; to break the spirit of the black man and humiliate him into hopelessness; to establish a new dictatorship of property in the South through the color line. It was a triumph of men who in their effort to replace equality with caste and to build inordinate wealth on a foundation of abject poverty have succeeded in killing democracy, art and religion.

And yet, despite this, and despite the long step backward toward slavery that black folk have been pushed, they have made withal a brave and fine fight; a fight against ridicule and monstrous caricature, against every refinement of cruelty and gross insult, against starvation, disease and murder in every form. It has left in their soul its scars, its deep scars; but when all is said, through it all has gone a thread of brave and splendid friendship from those few and rare men and women of white skins, North and South, who have dared to know and help and love black folk.

The unending tragedy of Reconstruction is the utter inability of the American mind to grasp its real significance, its national and world-wide implications. It was vain for Sumner and Stevens to hammer in the ears of the people that this problem involved the very foundations of American democracy, both political and economic. We are still too blind and infatuated to conceive of the emancipation of the laboring class in half the nation as a revolution comparable to the upheavals in France in the past, and in Russia, Spain, India and China today. We were worried when the beginnings of this experiment cost Eighteen Millions of Dollars, and quite aghast when a debt of Two Hundred and Twenty-Five Millions was involved, including waste and theft. We apparently expected that this social upheaval was going to be accomplished with peace, honesty and efficiency, and that the planters were going quietly to surrender the right to live on the labor of black folk, after two hundred and fifty years of habitual exploitation. And it seems to America a proof of inherent race inferiority that four million slaves did not completely emancipate themselves in eighty years, in the midst of nine million bitter enemies, and indifferent public opinion of the whole nation. If the Reconstruction of the Southern states, from slavery to free labor, and from aristocracy to industrial democracy, had been conceived as a major national program of America, whose accomplishment at any price was well worth the effort, we should be living today in a different world.

The attempt to make black men American citizens was in a certain sense all a failure, but a splendid failure. It did not fail where it was expected to fail. It was Athanasius contra mundum, with back to the wall, outnumbered ten to one, with all the wealth and all the opportunity, and all the world against him. And only in his hands and heart the consciousness of a great and just cause; fighting the battle of all the oppressed and despised humanity of every race and color, against the massed hirelings of Religion, Science, Education, Law, and brute force.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,  
Such as few men can claim;  
Deep down below a prison-yard,  
Naked, for greater shame,  
He lies, with fetters on each foot,  
Wrapt in a sheet of flame! . . .

OSCAR WILDE

- 37a. *U. S. v. Reese*, 92, U. S. 214; *U. S. v. Cruikshank*, 92, U. S. 542.
- 38. Cable, *Silent South*, p. 36.
- 39. *Occasional Papers*, American Negro Academy, No. 15, p. 10.
- 40. *Macon Telegraph*, October 18, November 3, 1933.
- 41. Keeler, *American Bastilles*, pp. 7, 8.
- 42. Cable, *Silent South*, p. 171.
- 43. *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXVII, p. 483.



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## NEFP Note

The 1876 Compromise centered around the presidential election of that year between Hayes (Rep) and Tilden (Dem). The election was close, neither one got a majority of electoral votes because 20 of them were disputed. In such a case the election is made by the House of Representatives - a deal was made between the Republicans (anti-slavery) and the Democrats (pro-slavery). Hayes was given the presidency in return for withdrawing Union soldiers from the South (Democratic territory). This action gave the Republicans the Presidency while effectively destroying the Reconstruction Governments (whose effective mainstay was the Union Army).

These portions of Black Reconstruction in America by W.E.B. DuBois were excerpted by Tim Morearty, a New England Free Press staff member. We recommend the reading of the whole book reprinted by Russell & Russell division of Atheneum Publishers New York, 1969.

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