Some Present-Day Views of the Southern Race Problem
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SOME PRESENT-DAY VIEWS OF THE SOUTHERN RACE PROBLEM

To set myself right with the reader, I may take occasion at the outset to say that I am a native of a border state, that one of my grandfathers was an abolitionist and the other a slaveholder, that I have lived for a number of years at some distance north and south of Mason and Dixon's Line, and hence I trust can honestly disclaim all prejudice in regard to the racial problem—for a problem it is, at once dark, vast, and depressing. Having been interested in this problem for many years, I have found it both stimulative and instructive to read the opinions of recent writers who have studied the question from different points of view, and to compare their ideas with my own observations and experiences. The results of the comparison of four of these writers will prove, I hope, of some interest and value to my readers.

First of all, Mr. Ray Stannard Baker1 thinks that at the present time two well-defined impulses may be said to exist in the South, one toward the development of a hard caste system, the other toward a reasonable, kindly, and honorable working together of the races. In the light of this conclusion he describes in attractive style such matters as the necessity of negro labor to the South; the fact that the higher the wages the fewer are the workers (it is much easier then to live at someone else's expense); the large number of loafers; the overwhelming proportion of negroes in agricultural pursuits (about eighty-three per cent); the segregation of the races; the feeling against the educated negroes (though he utterly fails to grasp the causes of this feeling); the condition of the negroes in the North; finally, the special problem of the mulattoes, who constitute from one-fourth to one-third of the colored population. He rightly holds that the problem is one that concerns the entire nation, and urges that the negro must be trained to his highest capacity. Yet he evidently rates that capacity much higher than would those ob-

servers who have the most intimate knowledge of the negro and his peculiarities of character.

Mr. Baker's book is journalistic and dramatic. It is perhaps more valuable as material for use by a student of the subject than as a basis for generalizations, and is interesting as an indication of attitude rather than as a scholarly and original contribution.

In contrast to the above, Professor Josiah Royce's essay on "Race Questions and Prejudices" is a more worthy treatment of the matter, from a psychological and philosophic standpoint. He rightly maintains that there is no really scientific basis of race differentiation, and adds that "social inequality" rather than an "approach to equality" is responsible for racial amalgamation (p. 21). Of course this latter statement is true only as regards illicit relations which are undoubtedly furthered by the attitude of a superior toward an inferior race, but I am sure it is inevitable that equality would lead to legal relations between them being entered upon and finally result in amalgamation after all. The history of the world, not to mention Massachusetts, is sufficient proof of this.

Taking Jamaica as an example, he thinks that the English have solved the problem on that island, and have done so by means of "good administration" and "reticence". This argument may be used easily to justify the Southern policy of racial segregation and social inequality. If we consider the matter for a moment, we must realize that good administration is made possible in Jamaica only by a governing race, and in the United States there is theoretically no such people, for negroes are supposedly equal citizens with the whites. Therefore the South may be said to be only attempting through its policy of segregation and subordination to realize a condition where the Jamaican method would be possible. "Reticence" would mean—Discuss the race as a whole, but treat individuals according to their deserts. This, too, is in harmony with the Southern habit. According to my own observation the average Northerner is

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theoretically fond of the negro race as a whole, but detests the
individual, while the Southerner on the other hand hates the
race but is very fond of and friendly toward various individual
negroes. In the long run, which is more apt to reward the
deserving?

Another Harvard professor, Dr. Albert Bushnell Hart, has
published more lately a valuable contribution to the subject
with the title of the Southern South. He well says that at
the present day the North is tired of the negro problem and
less inclined to interfere than at any other time during the
last forty years, but that this section of the country has an in-
terest and responsibility in the question which it helped to bring
upon the nation. Professor Hart also makes the following
admission which, considering his birth and training, cannot fail
to seem especially significant to the South: "Race measured
by race, the negro is inferior, and his past history in Africa and
America leads to the belief that he will remain inferior in race
stamina and race achievement." (p. 105).

Professor Hart notes that the negro is showing a lessening
rate of increase in most parts of the South. Thus in the period
1860 to 1880 the whites in the South increased by sixty per
cent, and the blacks by forty-eight per cent, while from 1880 to
1900 the rates were respectively sixty per cent and thirty-nine
per cent. Of course the question at once arises—What is the
cause of this relative decrease? While he does not adequately
discuss this, it seems to me that the correct answer would be—
Immigration to the North, the ravages of disease, and the in-
creased cost and difficulty of living.

Further, Professor Hart thinks that the negro will work, and
that as a rule only the city negroes are averse to labor. I
fear he is sadly misinformed in this, for the crowds of negroes
loafing at every cross-roads village or in front of the "co't
house" of every little county seat in the South is a standing
refutation; so that it may be a question only of the relative de-
gree of indolence. Another proof not altogether answered by
the comparative recency of the abolition of slavery, is the fact

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that the negroes, while they constitute one-third of the Southern population, own but one-fortieth of the property.

Professor Hart is opposed to racial amalgamation as inevitably meaning a decline in civilization, but laughs at the idea of opposition to social equality. Herein he confuses the idea of society in the general sense of community, and society in the special sense of birth, breeding, culture, fellowship, and companionship. Southerners do not, as a class, object to formal business equality, but they do object to equality in informal, personal matters. Again, he thinks that economically the negro is absolutely necessary to the welfare of the South, not only as regards the present but also as regards the future, for he can discern no substitute. We shall find that in this latter particular he contradicts the views of Mr. Alfred Holt Stone of Mississippi, whose opinions are given later.

The views held by the majority of intelligent people in the South are summarized as follows: There must be dominance of the white race; no legalized admixture of the races; the Southern whites will settle the problem and alone (and that without the active help of the negroes); the poor whites and their uplift are a part of the same problem; and the North must keep hands off, though there is a class of white leaders which welcomes Northern discussion and help.

Professor Hart offers the following as a partial solution of the problem:

First, we must apply to negroes "the same kind of law and justice that the experience of the Anglo-Saxon has found necessary for its own protection."

Second, the negro must attain greater economic efficiency, which will afford a bond of respect and commercial unity with the whites.

Third, all moral and educational means, such as the church, white teachers, and moral encouragement, must be used to aid in his advancement.

"From every point of view, the obvious thing for the South
is to make the best of its condition and not the worst, to give opportunities of uplift to all those who can appropriate them, to raise the negro race to as high a point as it is capable of occupying. This is a long, hard process, full of disappointment and perhaps bitterness. The problem is not soluble in the sense that anyone can foresee a wholly peaceful and contented community divided into two camps; but the races can live alongside, and cooperate, though one be superior to the other. That superiority only throws the greater responsibility on the upper race. Nobody has ever given better advice to the South than Senator John Sharp Williams:—"In the face of this great problem it would be well that wise men think more, good men pray more, and that all men talk less and curse less." In that spirit the problem will be solved, because it will be manfully confronted." (p. 393-394).

It seems to me that Professor Hart gives an exceptionally fair treatment of the subject, but shows a tendency to use to too great an extent an unusual and brilliant faculty in making deductions from almost any particular data. With strange inconsistency he accuses the Southern people of generalizing from their experience with the few blacks they know, and then criticizes Judge Norwood of Georgia for making generalizations after having tried twelve thousand cases of negroes in the city courts of Savannah. I am strongly inclined to doubt his statement that the "white people do not know the negroes in their churches, their schools, their cabins, etc., but only know the criminals of the race." This may be a tendency, but it is not yet a fact. The book is especially interesting as a contribution to the subject by a Northerner who approaches it sympathetically and with a broad-minded toleration. It is a very significant fact that he makes such a close approach to Southern views on the problem, and naturally leads one to the heart-searching question—Is not the South right after all?

Mr. Alfred Holt Stone, in a book entitled Studies in the American Race Problem, offers the best and most convincing discussion I have yet read. His is a cold, calm statement of

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facts drawn largely from long years of observation and actual experience in the South.

Mr. Stone gives, with great acuteness, the following summary of the chief characteristics of the negro in the South:—A disregard of the marriage relation; brutality to wife and children; a migratory habit; general unreliability; a few who are drunkards but few who do not drink (both men and women); a small difference between negroes of town and country; an inability to distinguish between the simplest forms or real and fictitious advantage; a lack of logical thought and a control more by fancies than by common sense; an easy-going indolence that chafes under restraints that restrict its enjoyment; a tendency to "lean too much upon the Lord and not enough upon one's self in things spiritual"; an entire improvidence that will run into debt; cheerfulness and acceptance of a situation; a love of palaver and juggling with words.—Not the picture of an optimist, and yet how true it is in every particular! Mr. Stone seems to think that the whole matter can be summed up in two words—improvidence and immorality.

He maintains that all people, both North and South, are fundamentally alike in their attitude toward the negro, and that the experience of countries other than the United States—even Professor Royce's paradise of Jamaica—shows the same racial antipathy. Furthermore, Northern conditions are extending to the South. In support of this latter statement, a clear and convincing chapter is devoted to a description of the various experiments made with Italian laborers on the cotton plantations of Arkansas and Mississippi. It appears that the Italians are a more permanent and assured tenantry, that they cultivate the soil more carefully and in a better way, and they do it without the almost paternalistic supervision of labor required by negro cotton hands. Finally, the Italians are more reliable in observing contracts, and thus cause less loss to the capitalists. Indeed,

4 Since the above was written a short time ago, the University of Michigan has published (1913) a work by Dr. Frank U. Quillin entitled The Color Line in Ohio. Dr. Quillin arrives at precisely the same conclusion as Mr. Stone, after a thorough investigation of conditions in Ohio at the present time.
the claim is made without hesitation that as a matter of fact they are driving out the negroes.

Mr. Stone urges as the most essential element in the solution of the problem, the purification of the home life of the negro. He disclaims any attempt at a final solution, which could be attained only by extermination or amalgamation (and both are impossible), but urges that the negro must be let alone and must be given time. It is a question of race and not of place. The negroes must be taught pride and solidarity, and the two races must "arrive at some basis of common occupancy of their respective territories, which shall be mutually satisfactory, even if not wholly free from friction." When the negro develops the capacity and aptitude for government, he will be given his share—even by the people of the South—and till then, therefore, he should eschew politics and turn to self-development in an economic and intellectual sense. "The negro masses of America at present form a peasant class, and we could much more truly help them by frankly recognizing the fact. Every race has its peasant stage, and in its evolutionary processes the Negro is no exception to the rule. It seems to me the part of wisdom to recognize the existence of this great class . . . . and to wisely study its necessities and honestly administer to its needs. . . . . Every policy of this government which has touched the Negro's political life has been based upon the assumed opposition of the Southern people. And failure is written large across the record. Why not raise the matter out of the quagmire of present politics and ancient sectionalism and frankly leave it where it belongs, and where the very logic of its inherent elements inevitably must some day place it,—with the people of the South, both white and black? Why not try the plan? Its execution would be extremely simple. What the Negro needs just now is a political 'rest cure'. His daily litany should include a prayer to be let alone." (pp. 420-421).

Although Mr. Stone is very careful in his deductions and sane and reasonably dispassionate in his opinions, he is strong and decided in his judgments and conclusions. From my own more limited experience I should judge that among the four writers reviewed above, his conclusions are most nearly correct.
After all, the more I have studied this problem of all problems during the past few years, the more hopeless I have felt. I can pretend to no final solution, but only echo the words of a prominent Southern educator who once said to me in conversation: "I can see no solution of the matter, and don't know what may be the outcome. It seems to me now that Booker Washington in his industrial training school at Tuskegee is following the best plan yet devised, hence I am supporting him." Therefore, I offer the following suggestions as a palliative, and not as a cure:

The negro must be recognized as one of an inferior, not merely a backward, race. He must be treated as a "grown-up child"—with justice, but with authority. He must be educated and given every opportunity to develop to the limit of his capacity, and this education must in general take the form of industrial training. A few of the thoroughly capable negroes (and their number is pitifully small) should be educated above the average of their fellows to aid the whites in leading their people. Again, they must be given the opportunity to associate with the whites in business relations in order to learn by example, but not in social relations. This will be a fair safeguard against amalgamation, which is unthinkable. Only a selected few should be permitted the ballot, based on both educational and property tests, and if this is too hard to administer, then none should vote. The franchise is a gift and not an inherent right. Perhaps racial representation in the government on the New Zealand plan ¹ might be advisable, not so much for the purposes of government as to give the negroes the opportunity to voice their wants. They must be Christianized, but should have no separate church organization in the broader sense of the term, only separate parishes and minor units. The negro is a distinctly Southern problem, it is true, but the South needs the

¹ The natives have a fixed number of representatives in Parliament. The whites and natives are two different constituencies, and neither race has a voice in the choice of representatives by the other. The number of native representatives is permanent, while the white representation is based upon population and grows in strength with the increase in the number of white inhabitants.
loving help and sympathy and confidence of the North, and all should join in an effort to stop the agitation of the question, especially in politics, else we shall play into the hands of demagogues and give the negro an undue idea of his own importance.

From a sense of Christian duty we of the white race must maintain a truly sympathetic charity toward the negro, and that sense of duty must be long-suffering. Perhaps, after all, it is only necessary for us to realize that the teachings of the Christ offer the one safe basis for dealing with the problem and ultimately solving it, even though as individuals we may just at the present time differ as to what is the proper method of applying those teachings.

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