

385-0
words

Parti.
II #

The Negro's View of the
Festivity of his Race

CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

THE NEGRO'S VIEW OF THE DESTINY OF HIS RACE.

BY PROF. A. W. TOURGEE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

The people of the United States are at length awakening to the fact that emancipation and enfranchisement were not the end of the questions arising out of the existence of the African in America. As a slave he had been so insignificant a factor in our civilization, though for more than a generation a continuing *causa belli* because of the relation of servitude, that the country naturally adopted the idea that when once that relation was abolished he would entirely disappear as a disturbing element from our social and political life. It was imagined that he would be quietly and speedily absorbed in the good-tide of national progress and prosperity. That, as a political or social factor, *the negro* would disappear, and only individual negroes would remain as undistinguishable and unrelated units of our common life. This idea, natural enough to those who only half apprehended the complex relations which had arisen out of the joint occupancy of Southern soil by the two races in the relation of master and slave, has been thoroughly dispelled by the experience of the past eighteen years, and the nation now finds itself, with no little of amazement, and even with a thrill of nameless horror, facing the real problem, of which slavery and rebellion were but incidents. The question which now confronts us arises out of no artificial relations of the elements of society, but is one of those mysterious problems with which God mocks the foresight of man and astounds the ages by producing results whose causes seem to be altogether disproportionate therewith. We are accustomed to call these forces, which override the barriers of apparent interest and defy all the laws which human wisdom prescribes, race impulses, or race prejudices. In all cases, perhaps, the manifestation of such impulse is complicated by other elements and modified by influences, which so affect their operation as sometimes almost to conceal the real origin of the very molar movements of history.

Stated in its simplest form, the problem

which now confronts American civilization is to secure, if possible, the peaceful and prosperous occupancy of one-fourth of our territory by a population composed of equal parts of two races who are separated from each other by a barrier of color, which prevents admixture and assimilation through natural and social impulses, and renders certain the continuance of a marked and visible distinction for centuries at least, if not forever. In our case this problem is complicated by the following extraneous considerations. (1) For more than two centuries the line of race marked also the distinction between freedom and servitude. (2) The white race, within the region of appreciable co-occupation of the soil, *without exception* and with an inconceivable intensity, believe in their own inherent superiority and in the essential and incurable inferiority of the colored race. (3) Until within a score of years, the colored race has been entirely subject to the domination and control of the whites, and has enjoyed no rights or privileges except such as the white man saw fit to allow. (4) By national legislation, the colored race has been given the same abstract right to civil privilege and political power as the whites have always possessed and claimed as an inalienable inheritance. (5) The great bulk of the wealth, intelligence and experience in affairs is with the whites of that region. The blacks are, as a rule, poor, illiterate and inapt in the conduct of affairs. (6) The colored race in this region seems destined to increase in numbers much more rapidly than the whites.

As a result of these facts the whites naturally look upon any attempt at elevating the negro as an effort to degrade them. They regard the negro as entitled to just so much liberty and power as they may consent that he shall exercise and enjoy, and no more. They consider the nation as properly "a white man's government," and look upon the attempt to inject the African as a political factor as an exercise of unjustifiable power, which of itself fully excuses all measures which may be adopted by the white race to nullify the operation of such legal enactments.

We have, therefore, as a result of what has been done (1) the line of race con-

stituting substantially the line of demarcation between parties; (2) the colored man practically debarred from all exercise of the abstract political rights conferred upon him by law; (3) the most powerful incentives known to humanity, arrayed upon either side for the continuance and intensification of present differences and the aggravation of existing evils. The pride of race, of power, and the fear of a degradation which no words can express, very naturally impel the white race to maintain the present status, and constantly to tighten, rather than relax, their grasp upon political power. On the other hand, the spur of opportunity and the sting of fear, sharpened by the memory and tradition of servitude and subjection, inspire, with equal force, the colored race to assert their rights, claim their privileges, and secure, in fact, the equality now accorded them only in theory.

These elements may be said to be still further modified by the following considerations: (1) The two races have a common language and profess the same religious faith. (2) Outside of the region in which the races are so nearly equally divided, there is hardly an appreciable admixture of the colored element. (3) Throughout the rest of the country, the white race not only does not sympathize with the sentiment of the Southern whites in regard to the negro, but does not at all comprehend its character. (4) The weight of public sentiment at the North is in full sympathy with the aspiration of the negro for equality of right and power, and looks upon the feeling which the Southern white entertains for him, not only with distrust, but with a feeling akin to ridicule.

Under these conditions, the question presented for American civilization to solve is embraced in the inquiry, "*What is to be the future of the African race in the United States?*" To this question several distinct and conflicting answers have been lately given. We do not propose to consider any of them here, farther than to say that they are all written from the standpoint, either of the Northern or the Southern white man. Practically, the inquiry made by these investigators has been, "What shall we do with the

Africo-American?" The Northern man, animated with the traditional spirit of his section, and under the impulse of an irrefutable belief in the divine right of man to equality of opportunity, as well as of right, with his fellow, answers, "Educate him; elevate him; give him a white man's chance!" The Southern man, imbued with the traditional ideas of his section and thoroughly convinced of the impossibility of establishing parity of opportunity and right between the races, and at least doubtful of the African's capacity for equal development, answers, "Deport him; scatter him; get rid of him in some way."

Thus far there has been no serious or philosophical inquiry in regard to the part which the African is likely to play in determining his own future. Speculation has been rife as to his capacity to receive instruction and to follow where the white man shall consent to lead. It has hardly been counted among the possibilities that there should be any inherent impulse in the race itself, which might yet make it an active element in shaping its own ultimate destiny. What is the actual relation which the colored race is likely to sustain to its own future is, therefore, a question of prime importance in the determination of the great problem now confronting our American Christian civilization—a problem infinitely greater, more difficult and delicate than any that either civilization or Christianity has hitherto been called to solve.

The view which the colored people, as a race, actually take of their own future prospects has for many years been a favorite subject of speculation and inquiry with me. To the casual reader it may seem absurd to intimate that it is no easy task to determine what the real sentiment of a people upon such a subject is. If a reporter were directed to find out what the opinion of the negro in regard to the future of his race really was, there is probably very little doubt that he would go to a dozen or so of what are termed leading and representative colored men, and ask their individual opinions. In so doing he would ignore the fact that the so-called leader more frequently represents the ideas he desires his followers to possess than those which they actually do hold. They

seem to be leaders because they speak as if they had authority. The lower levels of humanity feel, but rarely formulate. In nothing is the maxim that actions speak louder than words more startlingly exemplified than in such a quest. There is no doubt that the negro when a slave was wont, vociferously and universally almost, to declare his absolute contentment and complete satisfaction with the state and condition of servitude. At the same time, he rarely neglected an opportunity to escape from thralldom. The reason was so apparent that few were deceived save those who desired to believe the statement true. Yet, considered without the piquant commentary of his own acts, the world might have accepted the slave's testimony against his own hope. This dissimulation, born of servitude, has by no means disappeared with that institution, and the man who should attempt to gather the real sentiment of the colored race from mere inquiries among them, while he might reach a correct conclusion, would be very likely to find himself almost as much at sea as if he should try to learn the real value of specific stocks by questioning the loungers on the curb-stone of Wall St. Words and deeds must be construed together, and an intimate knowledge of the antecedents and characteristics of the race are essential to a just apprehension of what really constitutes the true sentiment of the race in regard to its own destiny.

As the first essential of a true appreciation of the negro's attitude towards the question of the future of his race, we must premise that his mind is not affected by one element of doubt which naturally obtrudes itself upon every white man's thought in relation to this subject. He does not believe that he is inherently and necessarily inferior to the white man in intellectual capacity, moral or physical stamina, but believes himself to be just as capable of development, self-support and self-direction, given the same antecedent opportunities for growth and development. Upon this branch of the question he wastes no thought. It is an admitted, underlying premise in his mind, the existence of which is very often overlooked by the white man who undertakes to estimate his mental and moral status. Having no

doubt upon this matter, he is compelled to account for the distance which separates the whites and blacks in the scale of development by the action of external causes. First among these, and separated from all others by a long interval, is the fact of the superior intelligence of the white man resulting, as he believes, solely from the better educational facilities which he has enjoyed. To his mind this constitutes the chief, if not the only, difference between the present mental status of the white and colored man.

Because of this fact the colored man, no matter how dull and sluggish his brain may be, is fully alive to the necessity and importance of intelligence as an element of progress and success. He fully understands the value of education to the individual, and appreciates it all the more highly because of the contrast between his own estate and the condition of the dominant race which is ever before his eyes. As a consequence of this the negro of the South believes, more devoutly than any people on earth ever believed before, that knowledge is power—the power of self-direction; the power which would enable him to protect himself from fraud and his race from oppression; the power that marks the dividing line between servility and dominion; the power that distinguishes the free man from the slave in every age and clime. He feels that the government that gave him liberty, while it thereby conferred a priceless benefaction, only half rendered justice for the wrong that went before. He remembers that for two hundred and fifty years his manhood ministered without recompense to the wealth, the comfort, the luxury, and the arrogance of another people. He does not forget that the labor, the strength, the manhood, of ten generations of his people were cast into the national treasury, and that his race have paid a higher rate of taxation than was ever before imposed to strengthen the power, extend the borders, and increase the wealth of the American people. For this, and for the blood of thousands of their fellows shed in defense of the Republic, they have received only that which was theirs of right: their liberty—liberty with nakedness, ignorance and poverty. He feels that the trust which the nation imposed upon him with

the privilege of self-direction and the burden of self-support—the duty of exercising the power of the ballot for the prosperity and good of the whole people—is in truth but a mockery of justice. He perceives that the nation, for some strange reason which he cannot half understand and which even the wisest might find it hard to explain, laid upon his shoulders this responsibility and then took away its protective power, gave him neither opportunity to acquire intelligence nor security in the performance of his duties, but demanded of him impossibilities, and because of his weakness, when his race had failed to perform miracles, cast them off with scorn and contumely. If his thought grows bitter when regarding the past from this standpoint, it is hardly to be wondered at; nor would it be at all surprising should he even come to believe that the white man, wherever his place of birth, or whatever his pretense of Christian charity, philanthropy, and pity for the oppressed may be, is always the enemy of his people.

Rightly or wrongly, the African regards the history of his race in America as one long category of evil and oppression. Of the benefits and advantages which his race received from slavery he is singularly insensible. Perhaps he would not be unwilling to admit the abstract advantages of its harsh tutelage, but when these are urged as the basis on which he is expected to rear a superstructure of unquestioning confidence in the justice, beneficence and wisdom of the white race as the guardian of his future interests and liberty, he stubbornly persists in denying that there is any meritorious motive on the part of the whites, or any substantial basis for gratitude or confidence on the part of the blacks, in the whole history of their past relations. On the contrary, he persists in believing that his people were imported, bought, sold, bred and worked, simply because the white man's greed, comfort, pride and advantage were enhanced thereby, and not in any degree for any good or gain the negro might receive thereby. When the advantages of civilization and Christianization are pointed out to him, while freely admitting the facts, he is sure to do so with a mental

reservation to the effect that the white race is entitled to no credit for what the colored people gained in these directions, but rather merits blame for the fact that they did not gain more and advance more rapidly. In confirmation of this view, he points, with singular obstinacy, to the fact that, instead of aiding the blacks to obtain knowledge and develop intellectual capacity, all the power of the State was invoked to prevent their growth in intelligence, and that the man who dared to teach them even to read was punishable as a felon therefor in every State where slavery prevailed. He is also very sure to recall the fact that the Christianity taught and practiced toward his race did not regard any right of manhood or sentiment of womanhood; that neither his own life nor his wife's chastity were protected by the laws which Christian white men enacted to perpetuate his barbarism and degradation for their own good. Nay, he will point out the fact that no slave man could have a wife, no slave woman a husband, and no slave child a father. For these reasons, and for many others of like character, which, though he may not clearly formulate them, he distinctly feels, the colored man refuses to see, in the past relations of the races in the States of the South, any ground for confidence in the white race as the director and promoter of his own progress and the guardian of his liberty. This conviction, growing more and more intense with every year's experience, is tending constantly to make the colored man a more and more important factor in the shaping of his own destiny. He may be wrong in his conclusions with regard to the present and the future, but in regard to the past, on which his inferences are based, there is, unfortunately, no room for error. Judged by the past, the white race, and especially the white people of those States which so long resisted the sentiment of liberty which has come to possess all modern Christian thought, have no right to ask or expect the confidence of the colored people. It may be that in their hearts they merit the trust they demand that the colored man should give to their profuse expressions of unbounded amity and good-will, but, judged by their record, there is nothing to be alleged in their favor that would induce any individual of

their own race, standing in the negro's place, to believe such protestations. Nay, more, it is safe to say that no white man of today, looking back upon the past which the negro sees whenever he indulges in retrospect, would regard that past with so much of patient forbearance, or the future with such absolute freedom from any spirit of revenge. The colored man believes that the white people of the South will co-operate with him in the task of development and progress just so far as their own interests or irresistible external influences may compel them to go, and no farther. It is, perhaps, a harsh judgment, but a people who have sowed so long and so liberally the seeds of injustice cannot reasonably complain when the harvest they gather is nothing harsher or bitterer than distrust.

There is another element of the negro's character which should neither be overlooked nor wrongly estimated in considering this question. This is his unfailing and indestructible optimism. His belief in ultimate good seems to be inseparable from his faith in God. The "good time coming" is a part of his religion. No possible disappointment or delay seems to be sufficient to dampen or disturb his hope. He sees the light ahead and rejoices in it as a certainty, no matter how wide the interval of darkness that lies between. His faith partakes of the attributes of infinity, and, to its impregnable confidence, "a thousand years are as a day." He believes now in the future success and ultimately happy destiny of his race just as strongly as in times of slavery he believed in its coming liberty, and with hardly more apparent ground for his faith. He cannot see how progress is to be achieved, as he could not then determine the instrumentality by which freedom would be wrought. The whole race, however, felt and prophesied to each other, by some strange, harmonious prevision, that, sooner or later, by some way they knew not of, by means which only the future might reveal, at the right time and in the manner ordained of God, their liberty would come. The Jubilee of which they dreamed and sang, the freedom for which they prayed, even under the master's eye, all that faith with which they regarded the dark and impenetrable

future as light and plain before the eye of God, remains still the heritage of this peculiar people. They do not, perhaps, expect so much of the miraculous as in the "old slave-time." They recognize the fact that the day of miracles is past. They do not believe that their advancement and elevation will come through any sudden uplifting; they hope that they may be spared the shock of hostile convulsion; but they believe that, by some sure and certain means, God will yet set them before those who have contemned and despised them, not as enemies, but as worthy friends and equals in the race of life. They regard their liberation as the result of divine interposition in their behalf, when they were so situated as to be unable to help themselves. Now that slavery has ceased, although they still look confidently for divine favor, they seem to expect it only as a concomitant of their own exertion. In other words, they believe that God will put before them opportunities by which they will be enabled to raise themselves to the level of the whites in intelligence, power and harmonious development.

In the specific respects that we have mentioned, as well as in some others, the negro's view of the destiny of his race differs essentially from that of any white man, no matter what his specific inclination toward the colored race may be. It will be observed that these tendencies and ideas are all stimulatory in their character, and point naturally towards a more active agency on the part of the Afro-American in shaping his own destiny. His ambition, now, is to be equal in power with the white population with whom he is brought in immediate contact. To this he will more and more strenuously direct his effort, as time elapses. Should the goal be reached in fact, or should it ever seem to be within his grasp, it is altogether within the range of possibilities that the New World may yet see a race striving for the mastery of some of her fairest fields.

Park II

3850
acres

The Negro's View of the
Destiny of his Race.

CHAUTAUGUA COUNTY NY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2013

THE NEGRO'S VIEW OF THE DESTINY OF HIS RACE.

BY PROF. A. W. TOURGEE.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

The people of the United States are at length awakening to the fact that emancipation and enfranchisement were not the end of the questions arising out of the existence of the African in America. As a slave he had been so insignificant a factor in our civilization, though for more than a generation a continuing *casus belli* because of the relation of servitude, that the country naturally adopted the idea that when once that relation was abolished he would entirely disappear as a disturbing element from our social and political life. It was imagined that he would be quietly and speedily absorbed in the flood-tide of national progress and prosperity. That, as a political or social factor, *the negro* would disappear, and only individual negroes would remain as undistinguishable and unrelated units of our common life. This idea, natural enough to those who only half apprehended the complex relations which had arisen out of the joint occupancy of Southern soil by the two races in the relation of master and slave, has been thoroughly dispelled by the experience of the past eighteen years, and the nation now finds itself, with no little of amazement, and even with a thrill of nameless horror, facing the real problem, of which slavery and rebellion were but incidents. The question which now confronts us arises out of no artificial relations of the elements of society, but is one of those mysterious problems with which God mocks the foresight of man and astounds the ages by producing results whose causes seem to be altogether disproportionate therewith. We are accustomed to call these forces, which override the barriers of apparent interest and defy all the laws which human wisdom prescribes, race impulses, or race prejudices. In all cases, perhaps, the manifestation of such impulse is complicated by other elements and modified by influences, which so affect their operation as sometimes almost to conceal the real origin of the very molar movements of history.

Stated in its simplest form, the problem

which now confronts American civilization is to secure, if possible, the peaceful and prosperous occupancy of one-fourth of our territory by a population composed of equal parts of two races who are separated from each other by a barrier of color, which prevents admixture and assimilation through natural and social impulses, and renders certain the continuance of a marked and visible distinction for centuries at least, if not forever. In our case this problem is complicated by the following extraneous considerations. (1) For more than two centuries the line of race marked also the distinction between freedom and servitude. (2) The white race, within the region of appreciable co-occupation of the soil, *without exception* and with an inconceivable intensity, believe in their own inherent superiority and in the essential and incurable inferiority of the colored race. (3) Until within a score of years, the colored race has been entirely subject to the domination and control of the whites, and has enjoyed no rights or privileges except such as the white man saw fit to allow. (4) By national legislation, the colored race has been given the same abstract right to civil privilege and political power as the whites have always possessed and claimed as an inalienable inheritance. (5) The great bulk of the wealth, intelligence and experience in affairs is with the whites of that region. The blacks are, as a rule, poor, illiterate and inapt in the conduct of affairs. (6) The colored race in this region seems destined to increase in numbers much more rapidly than the whites.

As a result of these facts the whites naturally look upon any attempt at elevating the negro as an effort to degrade them. They regard the negro as entitled to just so much liberty and power as they may consent that he shall exercise and enjoy, and no more. They consider the nation as properly "a white man's government," and look upon the attempt to inject the African as a political factor as an exercise of unjustifiable power, which of itself fully excuses all measures which may be adopted by the white race to nullify the operation of such legal enactments.

We have, therefore, as a result of what has been done (1) the line of race con-

stituting substantially the line of demarcation between parties; (2) the colored man practically debarred from all exercise of the abstract political rights conferred upon him by law; (3) the most powerful incentives known to humanity, arrayed upon either side for the continuance and intensification of present differences and the aggravation of existing evils. The pride of race, of power, and the fear of a degradation which no words can express, very naturally impel the white race to maintain the present status, and constantly to tighten, rather than relax, their grasp upon political power. On the other hand, the spur of opportunity and the sting of fear, sharpened by the memory and tradition of servitude and subjection, inspire, with equal force, the colored race to assert their rights, claim their privileges, and secure, in fact, the equality now accorded them only in theory.

These elements may be said to be still further modified by the following considerations: (1) The two races have a common language and profess the same religious faith. (2) Outside of the region in which the races are so nearly equally divided, there is hardly an appreciable admixture of the colored element. (3) Throughout the rest of the country, the white race not only does not sympathize with the sentiment of the Southern whites in regard to the negro, but does not at all comprehend its character. (4) The weight of public sentiment at the North is in full sympathy with the aspiration of the negro for equality of right and power, and looks upon the feeling which the Southern white entertains for him, not only with distrust, but with a feeling akin to ridicule.

Under these conditions, the question presented for American civilization to solve is embraced in the inquiry, "*What is to be the future of the African race in the United States?*" To this question several distinct and conflicting answers have been lately given. We do not propose to consider any of them here, farther than to say that they are all written from the standpoint, either of the Northern or the Southern white man. Practically, the inquiry made by these investigators has been, "What shall we do with the

Africo-American?" The Northern man, animated with the traditional spirit of his section, and under the impulse of an irrefutable belief in the divine right of man to equality of opportunity, as well as of right, with his fellow, answers, "Educate him; elevate him; give him a white man's chance!" The Southern man, imbued with the traditional ideas of his section and thoroughly convinced of the impossibility of establishing parity of opportunity and right between the races, and at least doubtful of the African's capacity for equal development, answers, "Deport him; scatter him; get rid of him in some way."

Thus far there has been no serious or philosophical inquiry in regard to the part which the African is likely to play in determining his own future. Speculation has been rife as to his capacity to receive instruction and to follow where the white man shall consent to lead. It has hardly been counted among the possibilities that there should be any inherent impulse in the race itself, which might yet make it an active element in shaping its own ultimate destiny. What is the actual relation which the colored race is likely to sustain to its own future is, therefore, a question of prime importance in the determination of the great problem now confronting our American Christian civilization—a problem infinitely greater, more difficult and delicate than any that either civilization or Christianity has hitherto been called to solve.

The view which the colored people, as a race, actually take of their own future prospects has for many years been a favorite subject of speculation and inquiry with me. To the casual reader it may seem absurd to intimate that it is no easy task to determine what the real sentiment of a people upon such a subject is. If a reporter were directed to find out what the opinion of the negro in regard to the future of his race really was, there is probably very little doubt that he would go to a dozen or so of what are termed leading and representative colored men, and ask their individual opinions. In so doing he would ignore the fact that the so-called leader more frequently represents the ideas he desires his followers to possess than those which they actually do hold. They

seem to be leaders because they speak as if they had authority. The lower levels of humanity feel, but rarely formulate. In nothing is the maxim that actions speak louder than words more startlingly exemplified than in such a quest. There is no doubt that the negro when a slave was wont, vociferously and universally almost, to declare his absolute contentment and complete satisfaction with the state and condition of servitude. At the same time, he rarely neglected an opportunity to escape from thralldom. The reason was so apparent that few were deceived save those who desired to believe the statement true. Yet, considered without the piquant commentary of his own acts, the world might have accepted the slave's testimony against his own hope. This dissimulation, born of servitude, has by no means disappeared with that institution, and the man who should attempt to gather the real sentiment of the colored race from mere inquiries among them, while he might reach a correct conclusion, would be very likely to find himself almost as much at sea as if he should try to learn the real value of specific stocks by questioning the loungers on the curb-stone of Wall St. Words and deeds must be construed together, and an intimate knowledge of the antecedents and characteristics of the race are essential to a just apprehension of what really constitutes the true sentiment of the race in regard to its own destiny.

As the first essential of a true appreciation of the negro's attitude towards the question of the future of his race, we must premise that his mind is not affected by one element of doubt which naturally obtrudes itself upon every white man's thought in relation to this subject. He does not believe that he is inherently and necessarily inferior to the white man in intellectual capacity, moral or physical stamina, but believes himself to be just as capable of development, self-support and self-direction, given the same antecedent opportunities for growth and development. Upon this branch of the question he wastes no thought. It is an admitted, underlying premise in his mind, the existence of which is very often overlooked by the white man who undertakes to estimate his mental and moral status. Having no

doubt upon this matter, he is compelled to account for the distance which separates the whites and blacks in the scale of development by the action of external causes. First among these, and separated from all others by a long interval, is the fact of the superior intelligence of the white man resulting, as he believes, solely from the better educational facilities which he has enjoyed. To his mind this constitutes the chief, if not the only, difference between the present mental status of the white and colored man.

Because of this fact the colored man, no matter how dull and sluggish his brain may be, is fully alive to the necessity and importance of intelligence as an element of progress and success. He fully understands the value of education to the individual, and appreciates it all the more highly because of the contrast between his own estate and the condition of the dominant race which is ever before his eyes. As a consequence of this the negro of the South believes, more devoutly than any people on earth ever believed before, that knowledge is power—the power of self-direction; the power which would enable him to protect himself from fraud and his race from oppression; the power that marks the dividing line between servility and dominion; the power that distinguishes the free man from the slave in every age and clime. He feels that the government that gave him liberty, while it thereby conferred a priceless benefaction, only half rendered justice for the wrong that went before. He remembers that for two hundred and fifty years his manhood ministered without recompense to the wealth, the comfort, the luxury, and the arrogance of another people. He does not forget that the labor, the strength, the manhood, of ten generations of his people were cast into the national treasury, and that his race have paid a higher rate of taxation than was ever before imposed to strengthen the power, extend the borders, and increase the wealth of the American people. For this, and for the blood of thousands of their fellows shed in defense of the Republic, they have received only that which was theirs of right: their liberty—liberty with nakedness, ignorance and poverty. He feels that the trust which the nation imposed upon him with

the privilege of self-direction and the burden of self-support—the duty of exercising the power of the ballot for the prosperity and good of the whole people—is in truth but a mockery of justice. He perceives that the nation, for some strange reason which he cannot half understand and which even the wisest might find it hard to explain, laid upon his shoulders this responsibility and then took away its protective power, gave him neither opportunity to acquire intelligence nor security in the performance of his duties, but demanded of him impossibilities, and because of his weakness, when his race had failed to perform miracles, cast them off with scorn and contumely. If his thought grows bitter when regarding the past from this standpoint, it is hardly to be wondered at; nor would it be at all surprising should he even come to believe that the white man, wherever his place of birth, or whatever his pretense of Christian charity, philanthropy, and pity for the oppressed may be, is always the enemy of his people.

Rightly or wrongly, the African regards the history of his race in America as one long category of evil and oppression. Of the benefits and advantages which his race received from slavery he is singularly insensible. Perhaps he would not be unwilling to admit the abstract advantages of its harsh tutelage, but when these are urged as the basis on which he is expected to rear a superstructure of unquestioning confidence in the justice, beneficence and wisdom of the white race as the guardian of his future interests and liberty, he stubbornly persists in denying that there is any meritorious motive on the part of the whites, or any substantial basis for gratitude or confidence on the part of the blacks, in the whole history of their past relations. On the contrary, he persists in believing that his people were imported, bought, sold, bred and worked, simply because the white man's greed, comfort, pride and advantage were enhanced thereby, and not in any degree for any good or gain the negro might receive thereby. When the advantages of civilization and Christianization are pointed out to him, while freely admitting the facts, he is sure to do so with a mental reservation to the effect that the white

race is entitled to no credit for what the colored people gained in these directions, but rather merits blame for the fact that they did not gain more and advance more rapidly. In confirmation of this view, he points, with singular obstinacy, to the fact that, instead of aiding the blacks to obtain knowledge and develop intellectual capacity, all the power of the State was invoked to prevent their growth in intelligence, and that the man who dared to teach them even to read was punishable as a felon therefor in every State where slavery prevailed. He is also very sure to recall the fact that the Christianity taught and practiced toward his race did not regard any right of manhood or sentiment of womanhood; that neither his own life nor his wife's chastity were protected by the laws which Christian white men enacted to perpetuate his barbarism and degradation for their own good. Nay, he will point out the fact that no slave man could have a wife, no slave woman a husband, and no slave child a father. For these reasons, and for many others of like character, which, though he may not clearly formulate them, he distinctly feels, the colored man refuses to see, in the past relations of the races in the States of the South, any ground for confidence in the white race as the director and promoter of his own progress and the guardian of his liberty. This conviction, growing more and more intense with every year's experience, is tending constantly to make the colored man a more and more important factor in the shaping of his own destiny. He may be wrong in his conclusions with regard to the present and the future, but in regard to the past, on which his inferences are based, there is, unfortunately, no room for error. Judged by the past, the white race, and especially the white people of those States which so long resisted the sentiment of liberty which has come to possess all modern Christian thought, have no right to ask or expect the confidence of the colored people. It may be that in their hearts they merit the trust they demand that the colored man should give to their profuse expressions of unbounded amity and good-will, but, judged by their record, there is nothing to be alleged in their favor that would induce any individual of

their own race, standing in the negro's place, to believe such protestations. Nay, more, it is safe to say that no white man of today, looking back upon the past which the negro sees whenever he indulges in retrospect, would regard that past with so much of patient forbearance, or the future with such absolute freedom from any spirit of revenge. The colored man believes that the white people of the South will co-operate with him in the task of development and progress just so far as their own interests or irresistible external influences may compel them to go, *and no farther*. It is, perhaps, a harsh judgment, but a people who have sowed so long and so liberally the seeds of injustice cannot reasonably complain when the harvest they gather is nothing harsher or bitterer than distrust.

There is another element of the negro's character which should neither be overlooked nor wrongly estimated in considering this question. This is his unflinching and indestructible optimism. His belief in ultimate good seems to be inseparable from his faith in God. The "good time coming" is a part of his religion. No possible disappointment or delay seems to be sufficient to dampen or disturb his hope. He sees the light ahead and rejoices in it as a certainty, no matter how wide the interval of darkness that lies between. His faith partakes of the attributes of infinity, and, to its impregnable confidence, "a thousand years are as a day." He believes now in the future success and ultimately happy destiny of his race just as strongly as in times of slavery he believed in its coming liberty, and with hardly more apparent ground for his faith. He cannot see how progress is to be achieved, as he could not then determine the instrumentality by which freedom would be wrought. The whole race, however, felt and prophesied to each other, by some strange, harmonious prevision, that, sooner or later, by some way they knew not of, by means which only the future might reveal, at the right time and in the manner ordained of God, their liberty would come. The Jubilee of which they dreamed and sang, the freedom for which they prayed, even under the master's eye, all that faith with which they regarded the dark and impenetrable

future as light and plain before the eye of God, remains still the heritage of this peculiar people. They do not, perhaps, expect so much of the miraculous as in the "old slave-time." They recognize the fact that the day of miracles is past. They do not believe that their advancement and elevation will come through any sudden uplifting; they hope that they may be spared the shock of hostile convulsion; but they believe that, by some sure and certain means, God will yet set them before those who have contemned and despised them, not as enemies, but as worthy friends and equals in the race of life. They regard their liberation as the result of divine interposition in their behalf, when they were so situated as to be unable to help themselves. Now that slavery has ceased, although they still look confidently for divine favor, they seem to expect it only as a concomitant of their own exertion. In other words, they believe that God will put before them opportunities by which they will be enabled to raise themselves to the level of the whites in intelligence, power and harmonious development.

In the specific respects that we have mentioned, as well as in some others, the negro's view of the destiny of his race differs essentially from that of any white man, no matter what his specific inclination toward the colored race may be. It will be observed that these tendencies and ideas are all stimulatory in their character, and point naturally towards a more active agency on the part of the Afro-American in shaping his own destiny. His ambition, now, is to be equal in power with the white population with whom he is brought in immediate contact. To this he will more and more strenuously direct his effort, as time elapses. Should the goal be reached in fact, or should it ever seem to be within his grasp, it is altogether within the range of possibilities that the New World may yet see a race striving for the mastery of some of her fairest fields.