

RACE AND AMERICAN CULTURE

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The History of an Idea in America

New Edition

THOMAS F. GOSSETT

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We may imagine that, sad as the persecution of the Indians was in the United States, it was a necessary result of the ideas of the time. A comparison of the history of Canadian policy toward Indians with our own suggests that this conclusion is not justified. As early as 1670, the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to conserve Indian life and society. The reason may have been that it was useful to protect the Indians to make it possible for them to continue to trap animals in the fur trade, but a policy of friendly good will and fair dealing to the Indians was followed elsewhere as well. The Canadian government made treaties which it did not break. It respected the landholdings of the Indians, did not appropriate their communal funds or divert them into charges for "administration" as our own government did, and did not tolerate widespread corruption in the Indian Service. It provided a means for the orderly transition of the Indian into Canadian life, but it did not force the procedure by separating the Indians from their land. The American treatment of the Indian shows the nation at its farthest point from the ideals of political freedom and respect for individual rights which, in other areas, it was able to achieve."

XI

The Status of the Negro: 1865-1915

FOR A LONG TIME the opponents of racial injustice were obliged to appeal almost exclusively to the altruism of the dominant white race. They could, of course, point out the equivocal nature of many of the racists' conclusions, but the racists had the immense advantage of the strong backing of scientists and social scientists. A striking feature of the literature of racism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is the patient way in which the racists explain "scientific fact" to their opponents. The attitude of the anti-racists is frequently hesitant, especially when they are dealing with questions of inherent inequality among the races. And often this "anti-racism" is—by modern standards, at least—filled with ideas which are themselves racist.¹

When a modern reader comes across the extreme racism of southern political leaders of sixty years ago, he is likely to equate their statements with those of the more extreme White Citizens Councils of today. But the fact is that such men as Pitchfork Ben Tillman of South Carolina, Tom Watson of Georgia, and James K. Vardaman of Mississippi—all of whom frequently expressed themselves in terms of coarse brutality—had far more backing in the South than Citizens Councils do now. And their supporters were by no means limited to the South. In 1905, Tom Watson closed an editorial attacking Booker T. Washington as follows:

What does Civilization owe to the negro?
Nothing!
Nothing!!
Nothing!!!²

In more restrained language, eminent leaders in the sciences and social sciences were saying about the same thing.

The extreme racism of the early twentieth-century South was the chief evidence of the failure of the North to change the South's ideas concerning the Negro. The scales were, in fact, tilted in the opposite direction. So far as the question of race was concerned, the South appeared to be more successful than the North in getting the whole country to adopt its ideas. The task of elevating the Negro from slave to citizen was the most enormous one which had ever confronted the country, and by 1900 it was doubtful whether it would ever be accomplished. Even Lincoln, had he lived, might well have found the task of Reconstruction of the South too much for him.

For most of his life, Lincoln shared the traditional attitude of many of his contemporaries that the Negroes were inherently inferior. As much as he detested the institution of slavery, he doubted whether the Negro was fit for citizenship and, in any case, thought it would be impossible for him to attain equality in a society which he shared with the white man. In one of his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, Lincoln expressed an attitude concerning Negroes which was often quoted by southern apologists after the war:

I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, . . . that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.³

Early in the war, Lincoln strongly resisted all appeals to identify the cause of the North with that of opposition to slavery. There were, of course, political reasons for his reluctance,

since slavery still existed in some of the border states which were loyal to the Union, and to adopt antislavery as a cause would have jeopardized their support. It is unlikely, however, that Lincoln would have felt differently under other circumstances. For the first year or so of the war he clung tenaciously to the idea of linking emancipation of Negroes with the proposal to colonize them outside the nation. He cast about to find places where the Negro could be sent. He was opposed to Liberia because he believed the climate to be unhealthful and the cost of transporting Negroes such a distance too great. He seriously considered a province in Panama, then a part of the republic of Colombia, but when his interest became known several of the Central American governments vigorously protested any scheme to send Negroes there.⁴

Benjamin Quarles has pointed out that as the difficulties of colonization of Negroes multiplied, the point of view of Lincoln toward the war was changing. By the time of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 he had come to see that the purpose of the war was not merely to restore the Union as it was but to bring about a "new birth of freedom." Thus, in the last years of the war, says Quarles, Lincoln gradually set his policy in the direction of granting political rights to Negroes. In 1864, for example, he wrote a letter for the private consideration of the governor of the newly reconstructed state of Louisiana in which he broached the matter of allowing some Negroes to vote. He asked "whether some of the colored people may not be let in, as, for instance, the very intelligent, and especially those who have fought gallantly in our ranks. They would probably help in some trying time in the future to keep the jewel of Liberty in the family of freedom." On the other hand, Lincoln was not disposed to force the southern states to accept Negroes as voters. Thus, if Louisiana was unwilling to give Negroes the suffrage, he was not willing to punish her.⁵

As might have been foreseen, the South after the Civil War was strongly opposed to the enfranchisement of Negroes. As soon as they were able, several southern states passed laws, the

so-called "Black Codes," which were designed to limit drastically the rights of the newly liberated slaves. When the Black Codes of South Carolina were published in 1866, H. Melville Myers, the editor, explained in the preface why such laws were necessary. The Negro race, he declared, at all times had "been excluded, as a separate class, from all civilized governments and the family of nations," since it was "doomed by a mysterious and Divine ordination. . . ." The war had settled the matter of the abolition of slavery, but this did not mean that Negroes were to be considered as citizens. They were to be "equal before the law in the possession and enjoyment of all their rights of person—of liberty and of property," but they were not to be voters and jurymen. "To institute . . . between the Anglo-Saxon, the high-minded, virtuous, intelligent, patriotic Southerner and the *freedman* a social or political approximation more intimate—to mingle the social or political existence of the two classes more closely," said Myers, "would surely be one of the highest exhibitions of treason to the race." Both whites and Negroes were "distinctly marked by the impress of nature. They are races separate and distinct, the one the highest and noblest type of humanity, the other the lowest and most degraded." Benjamin G. Humphreys, the new governor of Mississippi and still an unpardoned ex-Confederate brigadier general, put the matter succinctly. "The Negro is free, whether we like it or not. . . . To be free, however, does not make him a citizen or entitle him to social or political equality with the white man. But the constitution and justice do entitle him to protection and security in his person and property."

The Black Codes varied in their provisions, but generally they forbade the Negroes the rights of holding office or of voting. Negroes were not eligible for military service; they could not serve on juries nor could they testify in court except against other Negroes. They were required to have passes in moving from place to place and they were forbidden to assemble without proper permit by representatives of the law. If they refused to work, they could be fined and hired out to work by labor

contractors. Young Negroes were bound out as "apprentices" until they attained the age of legal majority. The rights of Negroes were generally restricted to ownership and inheritance of property, suing and being sued in court, and marriage.'

The Black Codes led Congress to institute the drastic Reconstruction Act of 1867 in which the South was divided into five military districts and southern states were to be readmitted to the Union only after they had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, which, among other things, decreed that

no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

The suffrage of those whites who had supported the Confederacy was drastically curtailed, and thus the South for a time was under the control of a Republican party made up of Negroes, whites loyal to the Union (the so-called scalawags), and northerners (the so-called carpetbaggers) who had come South as latter-day frontiersmen looking for business and political opportunities or as missionaries of northern altruism and philanthropy.

Thus began a program which was probably doomed from the beginning. When, in the generations following Reconstruction, any southerner was questioned concerning the rights of Negroes, he could point to the fearful excesses of Black Republicanism. He could explain the mixture of motives in the North—idealism concerning the ability of former slaves to assume the rights of government and vindictiveness toward the defeated white South—which led to the abandonment of the region to the evil opportunism of carpetbaggers and scalawags. What could be more right and natural, he could say, than that the white South should have put down "Negro government" as soon as it was able, by means legal or illegal?

More recent historians in the South have been much less inclined to see the Reconstruction period as an unimpeachable

argument for white supremacy. The "excesses" of Reconstruction do not seem as bad as they once did, and such corruption as existed no longer seems to many historians the inevitable result of political participation by an inferior race. The "excesses," it has been pointed out, were hardly limited to the Radical Republicans. One observer has described Reconstruction as "a prolonged race riot." No accurate count of the Negroes killed during Reconstruction can be found, but one observer thinks that five thousand would be a conservative figure. General Sheridan estimated that thirty-five hundred whites and Negroes were killed in the ten years of disorders following the war.⁹

The sufferings of the South under Reconstruction were less extreme, it is now generally recognized, than the historians were for a long time ready to admit. Francis B. Simkins, a southern historian, has led the way to a more balanced view of the period. The radicalism of the Reconstructed legislatures, he maintains, was much less far-reaching than is generally supposed, because it hardly touched the basic matters of land ownership and social equality. A really radical program, Simkins points out, would have called for the confiscation of the land of the white Confederates to be distributed among the Negroes, but the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau in this direction were "fitful and abortive." In addition, "no attempt was made to destroy white supremacy in the social . . . sphere or to sanction inter-racial marriages." Even those Negroes who were aggressive on the subject of their political rights in nearly all cases followed "the etiquette of the Southern caste system" in social relations.¹⁰

The mistakes of Reconstruction were frequently those of an inefficient idealism rather than of a thoroughgoing diabolism. The new legislators were inexperienced and badly led, even when they were not Negroes. There certainly were adventurers and swindlers among the Reconstructionists, but there were also many men of worthy character. Their chief weakness was that in their zeal for public improvements—particularly for building railroads and schools—they fell into the hands of dishonest promoters and skyrocketed the state debts. On the other hand, the

Reconstruction constitutions brought badly needed reforms to many of the states. Nearly all of them gave property rights to women, set up the first statewide systems of public education, placed the judiciary under popular control, created new tax systems with more nearly uniform methods of assessment, and established such welfare agencies as orphanages, asylums for the insane, and schools for the blind and deaf. In addition, they abolished imprisonment for debt and property qualifications for voting and holding office.¹¹

There certainly was widespread corruption in the South during Reconstruction, but there were other places in the nation at this time where politicians had expensive spittoons in their offices. The notorious Tweed Ring of New York City easily matched any of the southern states in amount of rascality and corruption. And as C. Vann Woodward points out, the so-called "Redeemer governments" who restored white supremacy in the South in the 1870's were themselves guilty of a series of financial scandals. The treasurers of seven states either absconded or were accused of misappropriating funds, and in some states, particularly Mississippi, the corruption was greater than it had been with the carpetbaggers and scalawags.¹²

The evils of Reconstruction were real enough, and some of that evil stemmed from the fact that slavery was hardly the institution best calculated to make good citizens of the Negroes. Whether some kind of gradualist plan for Negroes could have been worked out it is difficult to say. The more serious error of the Radical Republicans was their unwillingness to restore voting powers to the white people of the South, an action which—more than the enfranchisement of the Negroes—embittered the region for generations. Deprived of control of local and state governments, the white southerners resorted to extralegal means to intimidate Negroes generally, but especially Negro officeholders and voters. The most famous of the organizations devoted to this campaign was, of course, the Ku Klux Klan. Organized in 1867, the Klan originated as a lark among young men in southern Tennessee who—so the story goes—chose this method

of visiting their sweethearts attired in their version of the costume of knights of old and discovered accidentally that they were terrifying the Negroes.¹³

For a time the Klan was led by Nathan Bedford Forrest, one of the most respected of the former Confederate generals. At a Congressional investigation in 1871, Forrest maintained that he had been willing to accept Negro suffrage but objected to the fact that the vote was often denied to the southern whites. At the beginning, he said, the Klan had been careful to select its membership among the responsible white southerners—"worthy men," as he described them. The Klan "admitted no man who was not a gentleman." It took pains to exclude "rowdies and rough men . . . men who were in the habit of drinking, boisterous men, or men liable to commit error or wrong. . . ." But the Klan did not maintain its respectable leadership. Sometime in 1868 or 1869—the date is uncertain—Forrest resigned from the Klan and apparently did his best to disband and abolish it. By this time, however, the Klan was too useful to the southern whites to be thus easily destroyed. It became the organization of what Forrest called "wild young men and bad men." It spread over the South and by methods of terrorism—assassination, whipping, tarring and feathering—it sought to control the Negroes, the carpetbaggers, and the scalawags. In order to fulfil this role, the Klan was necessarily obliged to rely upon the lawless element of the community. In many parts of the South, the Klan was, in fact, thoroughly detested by responsible opinion. Prominent southerners of the time—men who were not scalawags—described the organization as composed of "reckless young men, without a great deal of standing in their community," as "a set of drunken and lawless vagabonds," and as "ignorant and without education to the last degree." In South Carolina, for example, the Klan flourished most in the hill country where the poor whites were especially powerful.¹⁴

The North finally wearied of its crusade to enforce the rights of Negroes in the South. Reconstruction was not officially over until 1877, when President Hayes withdrew the last troops from

southern soil; but as early as 1872 the period of coercion had virtually come to an end. Troops were no longer sent to enforce federal election laws; all but a small number of former Confederates had had their civil rights restored; the Freedmen's Bureau was abolished. More and more, the southern white man was the arbiter as to how many rights the Negro should be permitted to enjoy. The North—preoccupied with its own rising industrialism and with the development of the West—was mostly willing to allow the white South to solve its race problems without federal intervention.¹⁵

The difference in attitude toward the Negro before and after the Civil War is striking. In the South the antebellum propagandists for slavery usually portrayed the Negro as occupying a condition for which God and nature had fashioned him—as loyal, devoted, willing to be led, childlike in his helplessness. The slaveholders were, in the words of Thomas R. Dew, a professor and later president of the College of William and Mary, "everywhere . . . characterized by noble and elevated sentiments, by humane and virtuous feelings." Those few masters who were cruel and mercenary were "those who have been unaccustomed to slavery. It is well known that northern gentlemen who marry southern heiresses are much severer masters than southern gentlemen."¹⁶ In the North, as the abolitionist argument gained ground, the Negro was the pathetic victim of a cruel system; but this did not usually mean that he was the inherent equal of the white man. Harriet Beecher Stowe, for example, makes it quite clear in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that, in spite of the Negro's humility and aptitude for religion, he is innately inferior. On the other hand, he was entitled to freedom and to benevolent consideration by the white man.¹⁷

The lofty strain is not generally found in the literature concerning the Negro which followed the Civil War—not in the South, and increasingly not in the North. The theme that the Negro must be benevolently guided by the whites is still found in the South, but it is frequently a muted note. What replaces it is, often enough, an undisguised hatred of the Negro which

portrays him as little if any better than a beast. An important anti-Negro book written after the war was *Nojoque* by Hinton R. Helper, published in 1867. Helper was a North Carolinian, though not a member of the planter class. Before the war, he had warned the South that the plantation system and slave labor could not compete with the economic system of the North. When the war came, Helper remained loyal to the Union and was rewarded by being made consul at Buenos Aires. Though he was opposed to slavery, Helper violently hated Negroes and in *Nojoque* he expressed himself as appalled at northern attempts to make citizens of them. This book is one long Negrophobe oration. It has such section headings as "The Negro's Vile and Vomit-Provoking Stench." There is an extended treatment of the idea that the color white has always been in nature "a thing of life, health, and beauty," whereas the color black has always been "a symbol of ugliness, disease, and death." Sometimes Helper advocates removing all Negroes and Chinese to reservations in Texas and Arizona or colonizing them abroad, but sometimes his passion boils to the point where only extermination of "inferior" races will satisfy him. Natural forces, if left to themselves, he sometimes thinks, might dispose of the dark races. "We should so far yield to the evident designs and purposes of Providence," he declares, "as to be both willing and anxious to see the negroes, like the Indians and all other effete and dingy-hued races, gradually exterminated from the face of the whole earth." Yet "natural forces" were usually too slow for him. Concerning the struggle between the North and the South on the issue of slavery, he says: "It may not be questioned that an abundance of saltpetre, rightly applied to the woolly-heads, would have proved a most excellent means of unloosing the Gordian knot of American politics."¹⁸

A year after the appearance of *Nojoque*, a book written by a northerner, Dr. John Van Evrie's *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination* (1868), developed a similar theme. Van Evrie, a physician in New York City, was part owner of the firm which published *The Old Guard*, a Democratic monthly journal which

was founded in 1863 in New York, defended the South and slavery during the war, and attacked the Reconstruction policies of the Republicans afterward. A frequent contributor to the magazine, Van Evrie was a little less violent than Helper on the subject of Negroes and more familiar with the arguments of scientists concerning race, but his estimate of Negro intelligence and ability was the same. He thought that education for the Negro, if it was possible at all, would do irrevocable damage to his brain. It would develop the forward portion of the cranium and give the Negro "a broad forehead and small cerebellum" similar to that of the white man. The relationship of the cranium to the body would thus be seriously altered, the Negro's center of gravity would be disturbed, and he would find it impossible to stand erect or to walk."

Both Helper and Van Evrie reserved a special hatred for white advocates of Negro equality. Helper spoke of the "negro kissers" in Congress. The nation should never accept the Negro as a citizen: "God forbid that we should ever do this most foul and wicked thing." He denounced the "vile spirit of deception and chicanery" of the Radical Republicans and "the venal press and other peddlers of perverted knowledge."¹⁹ Van Evrie warned the North that nothing could change the inferior Negro.

In short, even his sleeping and eating for a lifetime with Ben. Butler, or Wendell Phillips, or Thad Stevens, or in fact, the whole gang of Abolition mongrels and traitors who now darken and disgrace the Capitol of our country with their presence, would not change a single iota of his physiognomy from what it was six thousand years ago."²⁰

When reconciliation with the North began to make headway in the South, the leaders of the New South movement were willing to concede that the Union was one and indivisible; but they were resolutely opposed to social equality for Negroes and almost as much so to their political equality, particularly in those areas where they might control elections. Sidney Lanier, for example, was a severe critic of the antebellum South and an advocate of co-operation with the North, but he had a low opinion

of Negroes and did not envision them as citizens. In 1874, when Congress was debating the last of the Reconstruction measures, a bill to require that all races be admitted equally to hotels, waiting rooms, trains, ships, theaters, and other accommodations for the public, Lanier wrote a poem in which he had an old Georgia farmer express what apparently was his own opinion. The farmer declares that "this here oncivil rights is givin' me the blues," and continues:

When every nigger's son is schooled (I payin' of the tax,
For not a mother's son of 'em has more than's on ther backs),
And when they crowds and stinks me off from gettin' to the polls,
While Congress grinds ther grain, as 'twere, 'thout takin' of no tolls;
And when I stands aside and waits, and hopes that things will mend,
Here comes this Civil Rights and says, this fuss shan't have no end!
Hit seems as ef, jest when the water's roughest here of late,
Them Yanks had throwed us overboard from off the Ship of State.

If the Yankees persist in their attempts to make the Negro equal, the old farmer concludes the result will be a disaster:

I tell you, Jeems, I *kin* not help it—*maybe* it's a sin;
By God! ef they don't sling a rope, I'll push the nigger in!"

Henry W. Grady, the leader of the New South movement and editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, was a popular orator in all sections of the country in the 1880's. Calling for an end to sectional animosities, Grady still maintained that Negroes must be controlled by whites. "The supremacy of the white race of the South," he said in a speech in Dallas, Texas, in 1887,

must be maintained forever, and the domination of the negro race resisted at all points and at all hazards—because the white race is the superior race. This is the declaration of no new truth. It has abided forever in the marrow of our bones, and shall run forever with the blood that feeds Anglo-Saxon hearts.

In a speech before the Boston Merchants' Association in 1889, Grady called for the influx of northern capital and men into

the South, a virgin field for economic development. "Give us your sons as hostages," he said. "When you plant your capital in millions, send your sons that they may help know how true are our hearts and may help to swell the Anglo-Saxon current until it can carry without danger this black infusion."²³

The mass disenfranchisement of the Negro did not follow immediately after the withdrawal of federal troops. This event did not occur until the 1890's and, in some states, later still. For a generation, the Negro was tolerated as a voter in most parts of the South—uneasily, it is true—and both the conservative Redemptionists and the liberal Populists solicited his vote. The reasons for the ending of this period of tolerance are complex. The agricultural distress of the South may have made it more necessary to find a scapegoat. The increased racism of the North may have made the white South increasingly confident that disenfranchisement of the Negro—if it were handled in the right way—would not bring about federal intervention. Whatever the reasons, the southern Redemptionist conservatives—now known as Bourbons—and the Populists turned upon the Negroes in the period beginning in the 1890's and vied with one another to see how far they would go in ejecting him from any meaningful participation in politics.

The theme of how the Negro eventually came to lose what political rights he had in the South has been admirably traced by C. Vann Woodward in his *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955). Woodward points to an essential part of the reason for the change when he says, "The South's adoption of extreme racism was due not so much to a conversion as it was to a relaxation of the opposition." Violent racism had been there all along, but it had been restrained by men who understood its danger. By the 1890's, however, the southern conservatives had lost much of their caution; the southern radicals of Populism had lost much of their idealism and zeal of reform. In addition, northern concern over the Negroes had declined.²⁴

The task of the white southern political leaders was to enact laws which would disenfranchise the Negro without also disen-

franchising the poor white and still remain within the legal interpretation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. In 1890, the new state constitution of Mississippi provided that all voters pay a poll tax of two dollars and that they also be required to display their ability to read any section of the state constitution or to understand and interpret it when it was read to them. The assumption was, apparently, that white registrars would usually hold the Negroes strictly to the law but overlook any deficiencies on the part of the whites.²⁸ The poor whites of Mississippi were apprehensive—and with reason as it turned out—that the literacy qualifications and other restrictions might be used to disenfranchise them. To meet this difficulty, the Louisiana legislature in 1897 formulated the famous “grandfather clause,” an ingenious device. This law provided that the right to vote should be exercised by persons who could read and write or who held property. If a prospective voter could not meet the foregoing qualifications, he could vote if he had voted on January 1, 1867, or if he was the son or grandson of someone who had then voted. Since former slaves had been forbidden the vote in 1867, the law served to disenfranchise nearly all the Negroes. The dramatic effect of these laws can be seen from the fact that the number of registered voters fell in Louisiana from 127,000 in 1896 to 3,300 in 1900. It is little wonder that, as southern states adopted grandfather clauses, a sense of helplessness pervaded the Negroes. In a letter to a friend, John Spencer Bassett, the white southern historian, described in 1899 the efforts to pass a grandfather clause in North Carolina as “an enamelled lie.”²⁹

For a long time the Supreme Court was unwilling to uphold the Fifteenth Amendment’s guarantee that the right to vote should not be abridged because of race. James Weldon Johnson commented on the efforts of the Negro to carry his case to the Supreme Court in the generation before World War I:

More than once he took his case to the Supreme Court of the United States, but the Court pointed out that he had failed to show that the state had abridged or denied his right to vote or that persons who prevented him from voting had done so because of his race, color or pre-

vious condition of servitude. So, unable to prove that the committee which had met him at the polls with shotguns was actuated by any such base and unconstitutional motives, he found his case thrown out. In the last analysis, he lost his vote because of the attitude of the Supreme Court.³⁰

It was eighteen years after the passage of the first grandfather clause before the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. The *Springfield [Massachusetts] Republican* commented in 1913 on the reluctance of the court. “Hitherto, no amount of legal ingenuity has sufficed to extract from the United States supreme court a direct, straightforward decision on the constitutionality of the ‘grandfather’ clauses in the election laws of many states, whereby the Negro voters have been disfranchised,” said this weekly journal. “The court has invariably disposed of cases designed to test the constitutionality of such laws on technical grounds.”³¹ In 1915, when the court finally did declare the grandfather clauses unconstitutional, the decision was almost meaningless. The device had originally been contrived to persuade the southern poor whites to vote for poll taxes, literacy, and ownership of property as requirements for voting. When the grandfather clause was eliminated, the other devices for limiting the vote remained and frequently operated against the poor southern white as well as against the Negro. Later on, the white primary replaced the grandfather clause in many southern states as a device to restrict the Negro vote.³²

The last attempt of the North in the nineteenth century to secure the vote for Negroes in the South came in 1890. When the southern states had been restored to the Union, they had gained in their number of congressmen. Before the war, only three-fifths of the Negro slaves had been counted for purposes of determining how many congressmen a state should have, but after the war the Negroes were fully counted. Thus, in 1880, the South had 135 congressmen in the House of Representatives, whereas in 1860 it had had only 108. The six New England states, on the other hand, had declined from 41 to 40 congressmen. In 1890, the so-called Force Bill to insure the right of

Negroes to vote passed the House of Representatives, and it was championed in the Senate by Henry Cabot Lodge. Southern senators, with the aid of western senators who needed southern votes for free silver legislation, defeated the bill.³⁰

Even ostensible friends of the Negro in the North sometimes counseled that he should cease his demands for the vote and concentrate on improvement of his race through education. In 1900, Bourke Cockran, an Irish-American congressman from Massachusetts, spoke at a race congress held in Montgomery, Alabama—the first important meeting of its kind held in the South since the end of the Civil War. Cockran startled his audience by calling for the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment. The Reverend Mr. Edgar Gardiner Murphy, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Montgomery, presided at the conference and later wrote to Cockran:

You will be surprised to know of the number of intelligent Negroes who have written in support of your contention. Most of the educated colored people in the South look upon the Fifteenth Amendment as I look upon it, as something that operates, whether unjustly or not, to range our white population against the Negro. They feel that if the Negro could be temporarily eliminated as a political force, the South could be freed from the nightmare of Negro domination and the whole South could work in sympathetic cooperation with him.³¹

Theodore Roosevelt, who was widely criticized in the South when as President he invited Booker T. Washington as a guest for dinner at the White House and also when he appointed a Negro postmaster in Charleston, South Carolina, privately expressed a low opinion of Negroes in his letters. In 1906, Roosevelt wrote to Owen Wister: "Now as to the negroes! I entirely agree with you that as a race and in the mass they are altogether inferior to the whites." Roosevelt went on to argue that it was inconsistent for southerners to argue that Negroes should not be allowed to vote and yet to count them in determining the number of congressmen they should have, but then he added: "Now remember, Dan, what I am going to say has nothing to do with the right of the negro to vote, or of his unfitnes gen-

erally to exercise that right." Roosevelt never invited Washington to dinner a second time, and in later years he said he thought the invitation had been a "mistake." In a private letter he also condemned Negroes for cowardice in the Spanish-American War and ventured the opinion that this defect was inherent.³²

A kind of fever chart in the history of American racism may be discovered by examining the annual statistics on lynching. For a long time, the word *lynch* had no connection with the death penalty or with Negroes. The name goes back to Colonel Charles Lynch of Bedford County, Virginia, who in the uncertain times of the American Revolution organized an informal court to deal with Tories and criminals on the Virginia frontier. The "court" limited itself to fines and whippings and did not hand down death penalties. When times became more peaceful, it was indemnified and exonerated by the Virginia legislature. "Lynch-Law" came to mean extralegal administration of punishment, particularly by whipping. In the 1850's, the term usually referred to the executions of horse-thieves and desperadoes by vigilance committees in the West. But during the Civil War and afterward during Reconstruction, the word *lynch* came to have something approaching its modern meaning—the killing of someone by a mob.³³

It is a curious fact that in the early years of the 1880's—when statistics on lynching began to be kept—considerably more whites were lynched than Negroes. Between 1882 and 1888, 595 whites and 440 Negroes were lynched in the United States. But inexorably the figures changed. In 1889, 76 whites and 94 Negroes were lynched. By 1892, lynching reached its highest recorded point, with 69 whites and 162 Negroes suffering this fate. Thereafter the number declined, though for the next twelve years, from 1893 to 1904, an average of more than a hundred Negroes a year were lynched as compared with an average of 29 whites. In the thirty-three year period from 1883 to 1915, the annual toll of Negroes lynched never fell below 50 but once—in 1914, when the number was 49. In nine of

these years the figures rose to more than a hundred. During the same period, the number of whites lynched was rapidly declining. In the years from 1906 through 1915, ten times as many Negroes (620) were lynched as whites (61)."

What was supposed to explain and justify the horrors of lynching as an instrument of "justice" was the raging urge of Negro men to rape white women. In 1942, a study of lynching disclosed that of the 3,811 Negroes lynched between 1889 and 1941, only 641, or less than 17 per cent, were even accused of rape, either attempted or committed. Negroes were lynched for such "crimes" as threatening to sue a white man, attempting to register to vote, enticing a white man's servant to leave his job, engaging in labor union activities, "being disrespectful to" or "disputing with" a white man, or sometimes for no discoverable reason at all. Mary Turner, in Georgia, was hanged and burned when she was almost at the point of childbirth because she threatened to disclose the names of the men who had killed her husband."

To read the details of lynching is to be reminded of the torture of the Middle Ages. Indeed, the lynchers could sometimes have taught the torturers of that era some lessons. The victims were lucky indeed if they were merely hanged. In Paris, Texas, in 1893 a Negro had his eyes gouged out with a red-hot poker before he was burned to death. In Arkansas in 1921 a crowd of five hundred, including women, watched a Negro slowly burned to death. He was chained to a log and "fairly cooked to death" as small piles of damp leaves were burned under different parts of his body. When the victim would try to hasten his own death by swallowing hot ashes, his tormentors would kick the ashes out of his reach. The victim did not cry out or beg for mercy but answered questions a considerable time after the flesh had fallen away from his bones. A reporter from the *Memphis Press* described the scene in detail and noted how after the victim was dead there was a wild scramble of the mob to secure his bones as souvenirs. W. E. B. DuBois tells of seeing the fingers of a lynched Negro displayed in the windows of a butcher shop in

Atlanta. Sometimes victims had their teeth pulled out one by one, their fingers and toes chopped off by axes while they were still alive, and frequently they were castrated or otherwise mutilated. Anyone who is nostalgic for the superior virtue of the past should read a history of lynching in this country."

During this period a generation of flamboyant southern political leaders arose whose major appeal was to the poor white tenant farmers and whose stock in trade was hatred of the Negro. One of these was James Kimble Vardaman of Mississippi, who campaigned for governor in 1900 in an eight-wheeled lumber wagon drawn by eight yokes of oxen. "We would be justified," Vardaman declared, "in slaughtering every Ethiopian on the earth to preserve unsullied the honor of one Caucasian home." The Negro was a "lazy, lying, lustful animal which no conceivable amount of training can transform into a tolerable citizen." One didn't inquire into the justice of killing predatory animals. "We do not stop when we see a wolf," he reasoned, "to find if it will kill sheep before disposing of it, but assume that it will." He admitted the cruelty of this logic. But, he said, "I am . . . writing . . . to present the cold truth however cruel it may be." Pitchfork Ben Tillman of South Carolina declared in 1913 that from "forty to a hundred Southern maidens were annually offered as a sacrifice to the African Minotaur, and no Theseus had arisen to rid the land of this terror." He said he had taken the oath as governor of South Carolina, "to support the law and enforce it," but added that he "would lead a mob to lynch any man, black or white, who ravished a woman, black or white. This is my attitude calmly and deliberately taken, and justified by my conscience in the sight of God." On another occasion, he declared that his opinion was "to hell with the Constitution" when it stood in the way of mob justice to rapists." Tom Watson of Georgia said that the Negro simply has "no comprehension of virtue, honesty, truth, gratitude and principle." The South had "to lynch him occasionally, and flog him, now and then, to keep him from blaspheming the Almighty, by his conduct, on account of his smell and his color." Lynch

law was "a good sign"; it showed "that a sense of justice yet lives among the people."³³ Negro-baiting became so profitable politically that there is evidence that white politicians sometimes subsidized Negro party activity in order to keep the opposition strong enough to seem to be worth combating.³⁴

A literary source of the most sordid kind of racism was to be seen in the novels of Thomas Dixon, Jr. *The Clansman* (1905), a story of Reconstruction days in South Carolina, reflects a violent hatred of Negroes. There is the following description of a Negro rapist:

He had the short, heavy-set neck of the lower order of animals. His skin was coal black, his lips so thick that they curled both ways up and down with crooked blood-marks across them. His nose was flat and its enormous nostrils seemed in perpetual dilation. The sinister bead eyes, with brown splotches in their whites, were set wide apart and gleamed ape-like under his scant brows. His enormous cheekbones and jaws seemed to protrude beyond the ears and almost hide them.

The mulatto mistress of the northern senator in the novel, who is apparently modeled upon Thaddeus Stevens, has "animal" movements and the eyes of a "leopard." Another Negro in the novel has a head which was "small and seemed mashed on the sides until it bulged into a double lobe behind." His "spindle-shanks supported an oblong, protruding stomach, resembling an elderly monkey's which seemed so heavy it swayed his back to carry it."³⁵

As the tide of lynchings rose in the 1890's, Walter Hines Page protested against them and correctly forecast where they would lead. "The gravest significance of this whole matter," he declared in 1893, "lies not in the first violation of the law, nor in the crime of lynching, but in the danger that Southern public sentiment itself under the stress of this new and horrible phase of the race-problem will lose the true perspective of civilization."³⁶ In 1907, William Graham Sumner—hardly one to be accused of an excessive sensibility—marveled that the country had apparently come to accept as a matter of course lynchings

accompanied by torture. "It might have been believed a few years ago," he wrote, "that torture could not be employed under the jurisdiction of the United States, and that, if it was employed, there would be a unanimous outburst of indignant reprobation against those who had so disgraced us." He confessed that he did not understand why the country had been so little moved to protest against lynchings.³⁷

Sometimes lynching was condoned or at least explained on the basis of the sexual nature of the Negro man. "The intelligent Negro may understand what social equality truly means," said Thomas Nelson Page in 1904, "but to the ignorant and brutal young Negro, it signifies but one thing: the opportunity to enjoy, equally with white men, the privilege of cohabiting with white women." The South understood the tendency of Negro men, and thus there was among the whites "universal and furious hostility to even the least suggestion of social equality."³⁸ A number of modern writers have attempted to explain and interpret the relationship between sexual attitudes and race prejudice, especially the violent kind exemplified in lynchings. John Dollard has mentioned the conviction of many southerners that Negro men have exceptionally large genitals and thus their raping of a white woman is a peculiarly horrible and brutal offense. Dollard speculates whether sexual jealousy on the part of white men may be a factor in lynchings. One still hears the idea expressed by white men in the Deep South that they wish they could be Negroes, at least on Saturday nights. Lillian Smith and Oscar Handlin have maintained that the puritanical code of religion in the South has in the minds of the whites invested Negroes with both the attraction and the horror of being completely free sexually. James Baldwin, the Negro author, is convinced that whites generally are obsessed with the Negro as a symbol of sexuality.³⁹

The most open and avowed attacks on the rights of Negroes came from lynchings and from denial of the right to vote. More insidious in the denial of equality were the Jim Crow laws re-

quiring separate facilities for Negroes. One of the last Reconstruction measures passed by Congress was the Civil Rights Act of 1875. It declared that all persons should be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of public accommodations—in waiting rooms, trains, and ships, in theaters, hotels, and other businesses generally open to the public. In order to enforce the statute, Congress gave federal courts exclusive jurisdiction in cases which arose with regard to it.⁴⁴

In 1883 the Supreme Court declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional on the grounds that the Fourteenth Amendment applied only to the states and that segregation by private individuals or companies was legal under the Constitution.⁴⁵ In this case, the Supreme Court was following a pattern of decisions which had been set by lower courts and by its own previous decisions. In 1867, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania ruled that a railway company could segregate a Negro if it chose to do so.⁴⁶ The Supreme Court of Ohio ruled in 1871 that school segregation was constitutional so long as equal facilities were provided, and three years later the Supreme Court of Indiana issued a similar decision.⁴⁷ In 1878, the Supreme Court held invalid, as a burden on interstate commerce, a Louisiana Reconstruction statute forbidding steamboats on the Mississippi River to segregate passengers according to race.⁴⁸ The best known of the "separate but equal" decisions is, of course, the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case of 1896 in which the Supreme Court upheld the right of a railroad in Louisiana to segregate Negro passengers.⁴⁹

Even under Reconstruction, the southern states did not generally attempt to have mixed schools for whites and Negroes. Louisiana and South Carolina were the only states with laws requiring mixed schools, and even in those states the law was not generally enforced. In Louisiana, P. B. S. Pinchback, a mulatto who was lieutenant governor of the state during Reconstruction, sent his children to school with the whites, but the white children made their lives miserable and finally caused them to withdraw. "They're good enough niggers," one of the white

boys at school is said to have observed, "but still they're niggers; you can't teach 'em not to be black."⁵⁰ As public schools developed in the South, some states made a genuine effort to divide the money fairly between whites and Negroes. Northern philanthropy played an even more important part, particularly in aiding colleges. But from the 1880's until northern philanthropists came to the aid of Negro education early in the twentieth century, Negro education—like all education in the South—went through a lean and troubled period.⁵¹

In 1890, Henry W. Grady declared that separation of the races need not imply discrimination. To think that it did was a misconception of "fanatics and doctrinaires":

. . . the whites and blacks must walk in separate paths in the South. As near as may be, these paths should be made equal—but separate they must be now and always. This means separate schools, separate churches, *separate accommodations everywhere—but equal accommodations where the same money is charged, or where the State provides for the citizen.*

The South, Grady maintained, was keeping facilities for whites and Negroes approximately equal. He stated, for example, that in Georgia, though Negroes paid only one-fortieth of state taxes, 49 per cent of the school fund was devoted to Negro schools.⁵² He did not mention other facilities for Negroes, but George Washington Cable said in 1885 that nearly all public accommodations for Negroes were dirty or unkempt. The Negro compartment on a train, he said, was "in every instance and without recourse, the most uncomfortable, uncleanest, and unsafest place: and the unsafety, uncleanness, and discomfort of most of these places are a shame to any community pretending to practice public justice."⁵³ In 1896, Supreme Court Justice John M. Harlan declared in his dissent to the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision that "there can be no doubt but that segregation has been enforced as a means of subordinating the Negro . . . [and] that the thin disguise of 'equal' accommodation . . . will not mislead anyone nor atone for the wrong this day done. . . ."⁵⁴

Even before the decision of the court, Booker T. Washington had bowed to what he thought was the inevitable and asked the Negroes of the South not to press for integrated facilities. In 1895, he made a famous speech at the Cotton Exposition in Atlanta in which he attempted to conciliate the white South by, in effect, accepting the principle of segregation. "The wisest among my race understand," he said, "that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly. . . . In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Washington had hoped that by agreeing to segregation he would lessen white fears concerning the right of Negroes to vote and to have equal educational facilities. Even so, he felt a great reluctance in making this concession. He tells us that on his journey to Atlanta to make the speech he felt "a good deal as . . . a man feels when he is on his way to the gallows." From a long-range standpoint, the speech was a serious mistake. It was hailed with delight by many whites both in the South and in the North; on the other hand, it had no effect on the campaign of white southerners to deny the Negro the vote and the opportunity for an equal education."

The phrase "separate and equal," comments Arthur Raper, "symbolizes the whole system, fair words to gain unfair ends." Only a year after the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision of 1896 we find James K. Vardaman in a campaign against Negro education in Mississippi. The state, he complained, was spending half a million dollars a year to prepare the Negro for "the higher duties of citizenship." Everybody knew that the Negro would not be allowed to be a citizen. His vote would either be "cast aside or Sambo will vote as directed by the white folks." Money spent on education of the Negro was a "positive unkindness to him." It rendered him "unfit for the work which the white man has prescribed, and which he will be forced to perform." Vardaman objected just as much to money sent by northern philanthropists for private Negro colleges in the South. "What the North is sending South is not money but dynamite," he ex-

claimed. "This education is ruining our Negroes. They're demanding equality." When he became governor in 1900, he drastically reduced the amount of state money spent for Negro schools. The only kind of education he thought suitable for the Negroes was vocational education and not much of that. The state colleges for Negroes in Mississippi were closed."

The possibilities of segregation as a tool in the denial of rights to Negroes were almost unlimited. Public services which existed for whites were sometimes wholly nonexistent for Negroes. In many communities library facilities, for example, were and are supported by public funds but wholly limited to white patrons.⁹ Usually, separate facilities were available for Negroes but they were vastly unequal. As late as 1936, the state of Mississippi was paying its white elementary public school teachers an average of three times as much as it paid its Negro teachers. The rest of the South was not this bad, but white teachers in the region were paid an average of over 60 per cent more than Negro teachers. White schools offered courses which Negro schools did not. White schools were frequently of sound construction, whereas Negro schools were frequently ramshackle affairs. John Dollard tells how a southern community as late as the 1930's built only the shell of a building for a Negro high school, and then the Negro members of the community were obliged to donate their time and money to build the interior of the building and to pay for the coal to heat it."

In the South, segregation laws were also a means of denying Negroes the right to certain types of occupation. There were scores of ordinances like that of Atlanta which forbade barbers to shave or cut the hair of both whites and Negroes—they were obliged to choose one race or the other. This was a method of preventing Negro barbers from competing with whites for the white trade. In 1915, South Carolina passed a law forbidding factories and other places of business to employ Negroes to work alongside whites except as janitors or scrubwomen or in other menial positions. The law was aimed at preventing the state's industries, the growth of which was partly the result of the war

in Europe, from taking advantage of Negroes' willingness to work at wages lower than those of whites—but wages which still meant economic betterment and wider opportunities for the Negroes."

Where could the Negro turn at this time to have the injustices against him redressed? Not to the courts. Just as the Supreme Court refused to pass on the constitutionality of the "grandfather clause" which prevented Negroes from voting in the South for many years, so it was also unwilling to examine the question of whether segregated facilities for Negroes actually were equal. In the 1890's a town in Georgia closed its Negro high school but not its white high school. The Negroes of the community in their suit did not challenge the segregation law, but only asserted their right to a Negro high school if there was a white one. The Supreme Court in 1899 denied the appeal of the Negro plaintiffs and, in effect, left the matter of how much education the Negroes were to receive wholly up to the states." In 1908, the Court had before it a case in which there was at issue a Kentucky law aimed at Berea College's practice of educating Negroes along with whites. The Court refused to pass on the constitutionality of the issue and, in effect, sanctioned laws against integrated education even in private schools."

The executive department of the federal government was equally deaf to the pleas of Negroes. Grover Cleveland hailed Booker T. Washington's speech of 1895 which had asked the Negroes to accept segregation without protest." William McKinley remained silent as the southern states proceeded one after another to disfranchise Negroes." Theodore Roosevelt outgrew the willingness he had displayed early in his first administration to champion the cause of Negroes. By 1912, he apparently concurred when the Bull Moose convention which nominated him refused to seat most of the Negro delegates, turned down a civil rights plank for Negroes, and selected a "lily white" southerner as his running mate." William Howard Taft began his administration in 1909 by assuring the white South that he would appoint no federal officials in their region who would be offensive

to them, and of course the white South knew what he meant."

It was the administration of Woodrow Wilson, however, which took the most drastic action against Negroes. In 1912, Josephus Daniels, who was then a North Carolina supporter of Wilson and was soon to become a member of his cabinet, was convinced that with the election of a southerner as President there was a chance that the South's attitudes and practices with regard to Negroes might be extended indefinitely in the North. It was in Wilson's administration and with his express approval that federal civil service workers were segregated by race in their employment, with separate eating and toilet facilities. When a Negro leader protested this segregation, Wilson all but ordered him out of his office because his language was "insulting." Post Office and Treasury officials in the South were given the freedom to discharge or downgrade Negro employees. In Atlanta, thirty-five Negroes were discharged from their jobs at the post office. "There are no Government positions for Negroes in the South," declared the Collector of Internal Revenue for Georgia in 1913. "A Negro's place is in the cornfield."

The political leaders of the South were well aware that no one of them could survive in office if he were to champion the rights of Negroes. When Pitchfork Ben Tillman of South Carolina would rise in the Senate to engage in one of his coarse and violent diatribes, some other southern senators might silently leave the floor in protest, but no one of them dared directly to challenge him. Tillman gloried in his speeches that the white South had illegally deprived the Negroes of their rights:

We took the government away. We stuffed ballot boxes. We shot them. We are not ashamed of it. The Senator from Wisconsin would have done the same thing. I see it in his eye right now. He would have done it. With that system—force, tissue ballots, *etc.*—we got tired ourselves. So we called a constitutional convention, and we eliminated as I said, all of the colored people whom we could under the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments.

Tillman also claimed the support of large sections of opinion in the North for his statements on Negroes. He said that in his

many speeches on the lecture circuit in the North he had met with enthusiastic crowds and wide acclaim for the opinions he expressed there. On the floor of the Senate, he taunted northerners for the race riots in their part of the country and for the hypocrisy of their avowal of the "brotherhood of man":

The brotherhood of man exists no longer because you shoot negroes in Illinois, when they come in competition with your labor, as we shoot them in South Carolina when they come in competition with us in the matter of elections. You do not love them any better than we do. You used to pretend that you did, but you no longer pretend it, except to get their votes.⁷⁰

The virulent racism of southern politicians was reflected in a torrent of racist books and articles written in the style of Hinton R. Helper and John Van Evrie. A compendium of popular knowledge published in 1887 had a page of drawings entitled "The Levels of Intelligence," with a Negro resembling an ape representing the lowest level. Books pretending to have the last word of science concerning the importance of race and the nature of Negroes multiplied. Charles Carroll's *'The Negro a Beast'; or 'In the Image of God,'* (1900), William P. Calhoun's *The Caucasian and the Negro in the United States* (1902), William B. Smith's *The Color Line: A Brief in Behalf of the Unborn* (1905), and Robert W. Shufeldt's *The Negro, A Menace to American Civilization* (1907) were books passionately devoted to the theme of Negro inferiority; and, of course, magazine articles and pamphlets were legion. Popular novelists explained their characters on the basis of racist theory. Thomas Dixon, Jr. has already been mentioned. Another Virginian, Thomas Nelson Page, stated his opinions more calmly but had a similar low opinion of Negroes. He maintained that "the negroes as a race have never exhibited any capacity to advance; that as a race they are inferior," and the fact that there were a few Negro doctors and lawyers proved nothing but that they had white blood in their veins."

Any age can display its fanatics, but what is more disappointing is the racism to be found among thoughtful and re-

flective men in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. There was, for example, Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, who became dean of the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. In 1884 he wrote an essay, "The Negro Problem," published in the *Atlantic*, in which he viewed with sympathy the attempts in the South to disenfranchise the Negro. Shaler had been a pupil of Louis Agassiz; he subscribed to the old theory that a Negro child is just as bright as a white child up to the age of puberty, but beyond this point his "animal nature settled like a cloud over that promise." In addition, the Negro's innate and uncontrollable immorality made him "unfit for an independent place in a civilized state." What progress the Negro had made he owed to the discipline of slavery. As a free man, the Negro showed a strong tendency, which was probably ineradicable, to return to his naturally savage state. Convinced that the Negroes were a dying race, Shaler recommended that they be scattered over the United States to prevent their becoming an overwhelming burden for any one section. Because they were incapable of higher education, their schools should be limited to instruction in the lower trades, since "as a race they are capable of taking pride in handiwork."⁷¹

A racist work widely read and quoted in the South was Frederick L. Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro*, published by the American Economic Association in 1896. Hoffman was a statistician for the Prudential Life Insurance Company in New York, who was convinced that the high incidence of tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhoea, scrofula, and other diseases among Negroes would lead to their extinction as a race. He rejected the argument that better conditions would improve the health record of Negroes. For him, the "root of the evil" was the "immense amount of immorality, which is a race trait." "It is not in the *conditions of life*" that we should look for reasons for the poor health record of Negroes,

but in the *race traits and tendencies* that we find the causes of excessive mortality. So long as these tendencies are persisted in, so long as immorality and vice are a habit of life of the vast majority of the

colored population, the effect will be to increase the mortality by hereditary transmission of weak constitutions, and to lower still further the rate of natural increase, until the births fall below the deaths, and gradual extinction results.

A Social Darwinist, Hoffman maintained that the only hope for the Negro was for him to be willing to subject himself to the same stern disciplines which had developed and conditioned the race of white men. "Instead of clamoring for aid and assistance from the white race," said Hoffman, "the negro himself should sternly refuse every offer of direct interference in his own evolution." Hoffman was proud of his own objectivity. He said that since he had been born in Germany and was not a native American he could write without "a personal bias which might have made an impartial treatment of the subject difficult."¹³

The idea that the Negroes were a dying race is frequently found in the literature of racism during this period. Albert Bushnell Hart, however, thought that Hoffman based his thesis "upon statistics of too narrow a range to permit safe deductions, or upon the confessedly imperfect data of the Federal censuses."¹⁴ Some students of race have explained the belief in the coming extinction of the Negro, a belief which seems to have been especially strong in the North, as due to the special conditions of the time. The fact that most Negroes were extremely poor, together with the fact that heavy immigration was then coming from Europe and the immigrants had a high birth rate, led some observers to see a universal trend in what was a temporary condition. With the curtailment of immigration in the 1920's and the migration of Negroes from the South to the North with a consequent rise in their economic status, the disparity shown in the statistical comparison of disease and death among whites and Negroes did not seem so impressive. As late as 1919, we find E. A. Ross, the eminent sociologist, declaring that American Negroes were one-tenth of the population, whereas a century before they had been one-fifth. "The great bulk of negroes are in the South," he explained, "for in the North the climate does not suit them and they tend to die out."¹⁵

It is striking how often one finds among intelligent and sensitive people of the period—North as well as South—crude reflections of racism. One thinks of Henry Adams' contemptuous references to "niggers" and of John Fiske's account of a visit in 1877 to Baltimore, where he saw "elegant niggers" promenading on the streets. Rayford W. Logan has studied the files of eminent magazines of the last part of the nineteenth century and found in *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, *Century*, and to a lesser degree the *Atlantic* a fairly constant barrage of epithets applied to Negroes—such terms as nigger, niggah, darkey, coon, pickaninny, mammy, buck, uncle, aunt, high-yaller, yaller hussy, and light-complexed yaller man. A standard device of humor was to give the Negro a fancy but revealing name—Colonel, Senator, Sheriff, Apollo Belvedere, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Napoleon Boneyfidey Waterloo, Lady Adeliza Chimpanzee, Prince Orang Outan, Ananias, Piddlekins, Asmodeus, Bella Donna Mississippi Idaho, with the ultimate in the name Henri Ritter Demi Ritter Emmi Ritter Sweet-potato Cream Tarter Caroline Bostwick. Thomas Nelson Page wrote a humorous article for *Harper's* entitled "All the Geography a Nigger Needs to Know."¹⁶

Henry James, who explored moral issues in his novels and stories with perception and delicacy, was impervious to moral issues raised by the status of Negroes. On a visit to the South in 1907, he had the following reaction to the Negro porters he encountered in Washington:

I was waiting, in a cab, at the railway-station, for the delivery of my luggage after my arrival, while a group of tatterdemalion darkies lounged and sunned themselves within range. To take in with any attention two or three of these figures had surely been to feel one's self introduced at a bound to the formidable question, which rose suddenly like some beast that had sprung from the jungle. These were its far outposts; they represented the Southern black as we knew him not, and had not within the memory of man known him, at the North; yet all portentous and in possession of his rights as a man, was to be not a little discomposed. . . . One understood at a glance how he must loom, how he must count in . . . [the South.]¹⁷

The studies of Reconstruction which began to appear in some numbers after the beginning of the twentieth century reflect among the historians mainly a criticism of the North for having allowed the Negroes in the South to vote and a sympathy for the South in having disenfranchised them. In a magazine article on Reconstruction in 1901, Woodrow Wilson said that the Negroes in the South had been "a host of dusky children untimely put out of school." Conditions had approached the stage of "ruin" until "at last the whites who were the real citizens got control again. . . ."⁸ John W. Burgess, in a book on Reconstruction published in 1902, said the North was rapidly learning that there were "vast differences in political capacity" between the whites and the Negroes and that "it is the white man's mission, his duty and his right to hold the reins of political power in his own hands for the civilization of the world and the welfare of mankind." Congress had done a "monstrous thing" in giving the Negro the vote after the Civil War. "The claim that there is nothing in the color of the skin from the point of view of political ethics," he declared, "is a great sophism. A black skin means membership in a race of men which has never of itself succeeded to reason, has never, therefore, created any civilization of any kind."⁹

James Ford Rhodes, who wrote the first detailed study of the Reconstruction period, fully subscribed to the idea that the Negroes were innately inferior and incapable of citizenship. The promises of the Radical Republicans to the Negroes had "fostered the native laziness and improvidence of the race. . . ." Rhodes thought it a great pity that the North had been unwilling to listen to such men of science as Louis Agassiz who could have told them that the Negroes were unqualified for citizenship. "What the whole country has only learned through years of costly and bitter experience," declared Rhodes, "was known to this leader of scientific thought before we ventured on the policy of trying to make negroes intelligent by legislative acts: and this knowledge was to be had for the asking by the men who were shaping the policy of the nation."¹⁰ William A. Dun-

ning, in a study of Reconstruction published in 1907, declared that the Negroes "had no pride of race and no aspiration or ideals save to be like the whites." They were "impervious" to criticisms of maladministration in the southern legislatures which they dominated. The whole difficulty of Reconstruction, in fact, stemmed from the fact that the "antithesis and antipathy of race and color were crucial and ineradicable."¹¹ In 1917 Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer chided his fellow northerners for having failed to understand the racial problem in the South during Reconstruction. The southerners had attempted to tell the Yankees who came South, said Oberholtzer, that the Negro would work only under compulsion, that "God had made him lazy." The southerners pointed out that the Yankees knew little or nothing about the subject because they "had never seen a nigger except Fred Douglass," and Oberholtzer observes that the southerners' opinion "was founded in a good deal of truth." He himself says that the Negroes were "as credulous as children, which in intellect they in many ways represented. . . ."¹²

The decision in the South to segregate and disenfranchise the Negro encountered no really strong opposition in the North. "We must not try to enforce in the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans," wrote Henry Martyn Field, a northern Presbyterian minister, "what cannot be enforced in the Fifth-avenue Hotel in New York."¹³ As grandfather clauses and other restrictions radically diminished the vote of Negroes in the South, powerful men in the North looked on approvingly. An editorial in the *New York Times* in 1900 said that "Northern men . . . no longer denounce the suppression of the Negro vote in the South as it used to be denounced in the reconstruction days. The necessity of it under the supreme law of self-preservation is candidly recognized."¹⁴ In 1907, when Kentucky forbade Berea College to educate Negro students in the same classes with whites, President Charles W. Eliot of Harvard called upon the North to be sympathetic to the southern view, saying,

Perhaps if there were as many Negroes here as there, we might think it better for them to be in separate schools. At present Harvard has

about five thousand white students and about thirty of the colored race. The latter are hidden in the great mass and are not noticeable. If they were equal in numbers or in a majority, we might deem a separation necessary."

There were, of course, men with different views in both the South and the North. But what is noticeable is that American thought of the period 1880-1920 generally lacks any perception of the Negro as a human being with potentialities for improvement. Most of the people who wrote about Negroes were firmly in the grip of the idea that intelligence and temperament are racially determined and unalterable. They concluded, therefore, that the failures of Reconstruction, the low educational status of the Negro, his high statistics of crime, disease, and poverty, were simply the inevitable results of his heredity. The defenders of the Negro were thus cast in the role of sickly humanitarians who refused to face facts. What was most needed at this time was a direct challenge to the intellectual bankruptcy of racist theory. Without such a challenge, one which would make sense to the hard-boiled disciplines of biology, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, the battle to improve the status of the Negro was a thankless and almost hopeless task.

XII

Anti-Immigration Agitation: 1865-1915

THE REASONS for hostility to immigrants in this country have not invariably been racial. The differences in customs and traditions of many of the immigrant peoples must, in the nature of things, have led to some suspicion of them. Xenophobia has changed according to conditions both here and abroad. After the French Revolution, there was prejudice in this country against French immigrants because they were thought to be atheists and revolutionaries. During the Know Nothing movement of the 1840's and 1850's, prejudice against the Irish was entangled with prejudice against Catholicism. The prejudice against German immigrants later in the century was associated in the public mind with dislike of socialism, with which the German immigrants were thought to be infected. But of all the reasons for prejudice against immigrants, it was race which eventually outdistanced the others and became, toward the end of the nineteenth century, by far the most powerful source of objection to them.¹

The prejudice against immigrants has generally developed from two quite different sources. The workingmen's organizations were usually the first to become alarmed because immigrants, often coming from countries which had a low living standard, were willing to accept low wages when they came here. In addition, cultural and language differences made it difficult to organize the immigrants into unions. The fact that they were "cheap labor" made them, on the other hand, welcome to employers and, to a large extent, to middle- and upper-class groups

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22. Jedidiah Morse, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-73.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.
24. *The Complete Works of J. Fenimore Cooper* (Leatherstocking ed.; New York [1893?]), XXVIII, 443; XXVI, 308-9.
25. *The Complete Works* . . . , III, 77-88; IV, 471.
26. *Ibid.*, XXVII, 257, 112-13.
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31. See H. R. Hayes, *From Abe to Angel: An Informal History of Social Anthropology* (New York, 1958), pp. 3-14.
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33. *Algie Researches* (New York, 1839), I, 18-20; quoted in Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization* (Baltimore, 1953), p. 122.
34. *The Rise of the West, or a Prospect of the Mississippi Valley, a Poem* (New York, 1841), p. 17.
35. Pearce, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
36. Hayes, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-18.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
39. *Ancient Society: Or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization* (Chicago, 1877), pp. 66 ff.
40. See Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
41. Quoted in Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 46; see Pearce, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
42. See Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (Boston, 1954), *passim*.
43. Collier, *op. cit.*, pp. 261 ff.
44. *Ibid.*, pp. 296-97.

CHAPTER XI

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3. Speech at Charleston, Illinois, September 18, 1858. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, 1953), III, 145-46.
4. Benjamin Quarles, *Lincoln and the Negro* (New York, 1962), pp. 108-12.

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6. See the preface of H. Melville Myers, comp., *Stay Law and . . . Freedmen's Code* (Charleston, 1866).
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46. *Stat. L*, Chap. 114.

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