

A DELAYED RETRIBUTION.

The retributions of social law are inexorable. The price of a wrong must be paid to the uttermost. The price of a great national wrong is a continuing lien, often borne by generations remote from that which committed it. The penalty of the mighty national sin that established and maintained human slavery upon this continent was not all paid in that sore liquidation of blood and treasure thirty years ago. It left social conditions in the South that constitute a constant drag upon the development, a perpetual drain upon the resources of the country. These conditions do not bear hardly upon the South alone. Their influence reacts upon the whole country, and sometimes the reaction is visible and palpable.

Part of the delayed retribution for the wrongs of slavery is the profound disturbance of the conditions and rewards of labor the country over, whenever the crude and cheap labor inherited from the days of slavery can be brought in competition with the higher labor of the rest of the country. This competition has been slight and infrequent in the past, since the ignorant and unenterprising black labor has confined itself in the main to special local industries, not in competition with the rest of the country. So long as black labor was confined to cotton and sugar growing, it worked no disturbance of the industrial labor market of the North; but with the development of cotton and iron manufacture in the South, in whose coarser processes black labor can be used, New England and Pennsylvania feel the force of competition and the higher grade labor of the North finds itself gradually pressed down to the wages and style of living which content the children of a generation of slaves.