

CHAPTER VI

CONFUSING MOVEMENTS

THE Civil War waged largely in the South started the most exciting movement of the Negroes hitherto known. The invading Union forces drove the masters before them, leaving the slaves and sometimes poor whites to escape where they would or to remain in helpless condition to constitute a problem for the northern army.¹ Many poor whites of the border States went with the Confederacy, not always because they wanted to enter the war, but to choose what they considered the lesser of two evils. The slaves soon realized a community of interests with the Union forces sent, as they thought, to deliver them from thralldom. At first, it was difficult to determine a fixed policy for dealing with these fugitives. To drive them away was an easy matter, but this did not solve the problem. General Butler's action at Fortress Monroe in 1861, however, anticipated the policy finally adopted by the Union forces.² Hearing that three fugitive slaves who were received into

¹ This is well treated in John Eaton's *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*. See also Coffin's *Boys of '61*.

² Williams, *History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion*, p. 70.

his lines were to have been employed in building fortifications for the Confederate army, he declared them seized as contraband of war rather than declare them actually free as did General Fremont³ and General Hunter.⁴ He then gave them employment for wages and rations and appropriated to the support of the unemployed a portion of the earnings of the laborers. This policy was followed by General Wood, Butler's successor, and by General Banks in New Orleans.

An elaborate plan for handling such fugitives was carried out by E. S. Pierce and General Rufus Saxton at Port Royal, South Carolina. Seeing the situation in another light, however, General Halleck in charge in the West excluded slaves from the Union lines, at first, as did General Dix in Virginia. But Halleck, in his instructions to General McCullum, February, 1862, ordered him to put contrabands to work to pay for food and clothing.⁵ Other commanders, like General McCook and General Johnson, permitted the slave hunters to enter their lines and take their slaves upon identification,⁶ ignoring the confiscation act of August, 1861, which was construed by some as justifying the retention of such refugees. Officers of a different attitude, however, soon began to pro-

³ Greely, *American Conflict*, I, p. 585.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 246.

⁵ *Official Records of the Rebellion*, VIII, p. 628.

⁶ Williams, *Negro Troops*, p. 66 et seq.

test against the returning of fugitive slaves. General Grant, also, while admitting the binding force of General Halleck's order, refused to grant permits to those in search of fugitives seeking asylum within his lines and at the capture of Fort Donelson ordered the retention of all blacks who had been used by the Confederates in building fortifications.⁷

Lincoln finally urged the necessity for withholding fugitive slaves from the enemy, believing that there could be in it no danger of servile insurrection and that the Confederacy would thereby be weakened.⁸ As this opinion soon developed into a conviction that official action was necessary, Congress, by Act of March 13, 1862, provided that slaves be protected against the claims of their pursuers. Continuing further in this direction, the Federal Government gradually reached the position of withdrawing Negro labor from the Confederate territory. Finally the United States Government adopted the policy of withholding from the Confederates, slaves received with the understanding that their masters were in rebellion against the United States. With this as a settled policy then, the United States Government had to work out some scheme for the remaking of these fugitives coming into its camps.

In some of these cases the fugitives found

⁷ *Official Records of the Rebellion*, VIII, p. 370; Williams, *Negro Troops*, p. 75.

⁸ Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, pp. 87, 92.

themselves among men more hostile to them than their masters were, for many of the Union soldiers of the border States were slaveholders themselves and northern soldiers did not understand that they were fighting to free Negroes. The condition in which they were on arriving, moreover, was a new problem for the army. Some came naked, some in decrepitude, some afflicted with disease, and some wounded in their efforts to escape.⁹ There were "women in travail, the helplessness of childhood and of old age, the horrors of sickness and of frequent deaths."¹⁰ In their crude state few of them had any conception of the significance of liberty, thinking that it meant idleness and freedom from restraint. In consequence of this ignorance there developed such undesirable habits as deceit, theft and licentiousness to aggravate the afflictions of nakedness, famine and disease.¹¹

In the East large numbers of these refugees were concentrated at Washington, Alexandria, Fortress Monroe, Hampton, Craney Island and Fort Norfolk. There were smaller groups of them at Yorktown, Suffolk and Portsmouth.¹²

⁹ Pierce, *Freedmen of Port Royal, South Carolina*, passim; Botume, *First Days Among the Contrabands*, pp. 10-22; and Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*, passim.

¹⁰ Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, p. 92.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 3.

¹² Report of the Committee of Representatives of the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends upon the *Condition and Wants of the Colored Refugees*, 1862, p. 1 et seq.

Some of them were conducted from these camps into York, Columbia, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and by water to New York and Boston, from which they went to various parts seeking labor. Some collected in groups as in the case of those at Five Points in New York.¹³ Large numbers of them from Virginia assembled in Washington in 1862 in Duff Green's Row on Capitol Hill where they were organized as a camp, out of which came a contraband school, after being moved to the McClellan Barracks.¹⁴ Then there was in the District of Columbia another group known as Freedmen's village on Arlington Heights. It was said that, in 1864, 30,000 to 40,000 Negroes had come from the plantations to the District of Columbia.¹⁵ It happened here too as in most cases of this migration that the Negroes were on hand before the officials grappling with many other problems could determine exactly what could or should be done with them. The camps near Washington fortunately became centers for the employment of contrabands in the city. Those repairing to Fortress Monroe were distributed as laborers among the farmers of that vicinity.¹⁶

¹³ *Report of the Committee of Representatives, etc.*, p. 3.

¹⁴ At an entertainment of this school, Senator Pomeroy of Kansas, voicing the sentiment of Lincoln, spoke in favor of a scheme to colonize Negroes in Central America.

¹⁵ *Special Report of the United States Commission of Education on the Schools of the District of Columbia*, p. 215.

¹⁶ *Christian Examiner*, LXXVI, p. 349.

In some of these camps, and especially in those of the West, the refugees were finally sent out to other sections in need of labor, as in the cases of the contrabands assembled with the Union army at first at Grand Junction and later at Memphis.¹⁷

There were three types of these camp communities which attracted attention as places for free labor experimentation. These were at Port Royal, on the Mississippi in the neighborhood of Vicksburg, and in Lower Louisiana and Virginia. The first trial of free labor of blacks on a large scale in a slave State was made in Port Royal.¹⁸ The experiment was generally successful. By industry, thrift and orderly conduct the Negroes showed their appreciation for their new opportunities. In the Mississippi section invaded by the northern army, General Thomas opened what he called *Infirmary Farms* which he leased to Negroes on certain terms which they usually met successfully. The same plan, however, was not so successful in the Lower Mississippi section.¹⁹ The failure in this section was doubtless due to the inferior type of blacks in the lower cotton belt where Negroes had been more brutalized by slavery.

In some cases, these refugees experienced

¹⁷ Eaton, *Lincoln, Grant and the Freedmen*, pp. 18, 30.

¹⁸ Pierce, *The Freedmen of Port Royal, South Carolina, Official Reports*; and Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal written at the Time of the Civil War*.

¹⁹ *Christian Examiner*, LXXVI, p. 354.

many hardships. It was charged that they were worked hard, badly treated and deprived of all their wages except what was given them for rations and a scanty pittance, wholly insufficient to purchase necessary clothing and provide for their families.²⁰ Not a few of the refugees for these reasons applied for permission to return to their masters and sometimes such permission was granted; for, although under military authority, they were by order of Congress to be considered as freemen. These voluntary slaves, of course, were few and the authorities were not thereby impressed with the thought that Negroes would prefer to be slaves, should they be treated as freemen rather than as brutes.²¹

It became increasingly difficult, however, to handle this problem. In the first place, it was not an easy matter to find soldiers well disposed to serve the Negroes in any manner whatever and the officers of the army had no desire to force them to render such services since those thus engaged suffered a sort of social ostracism. The same condition obtained in the case of caring for those afflicted with disease, until there was issued a specific regulation placing the contraband sick in charge of the army surgeons.²² What the situation in the Mississippi

²⁰ *Continental Monthly*, II, p. 193.

²¹ *Report of the Committee of Representatives of the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends*, p. 12.

²² Eaton, *Lincoln, Grant and the Freedmen*, p. 2.

Valley was during these months has been well described by an observer, saying: "I hope I may never be called on again to witness the horrible scenes I saw in those first days of history of the freedmen in the Mississippi Valley. Assistants were hard to find, especially the kind that would do any good in the camps. A detailed soldier in each camp of a thousand people was the best that could be done and his duties were so onerous that he ended by doing nothing. In reviewing the condition of the people at that time, I am not surprised at the marvelous stories told by visitors who caught an occasional glimpse of the misery and wretchedness in these camps. Our efforts to do anything for these people, as they herded together in masses, when founded on any expectation that they would help themselves, often failed; they had become so completely broken down in spirit, through suffering, that it was almost impossible to arouse them."²³

A few sympathetic officers and especially the chaplains undertook to relieve the urgent cases of distress. They could do little, however, to handle all the problems of the unusual situation until they engaged the attention of the higher officers of the army and the federal functionaries in Washington. After some delay this was finally done and special officers were de-

²³ Eaton, *Lincoln, Grant and the Freedmen*, p. 19. See also Botume's *First Days Amongst the Contrabands*. This work vividly portrays conditions among the refugees assembled at points in South Carolina.

tailed to take charge of the contrabands. The Negroes were assembled in camps and employed according to instructions from the Secretary of War as teamsters, laborers and the like on forts and railroads. Some were put to picking, ginning, baling and removing cotton on plantations abandoned by their masters. General Grant, as early as 1862, was making further use of them as fatigue men in the department of the surgeon-general, the quartermaster and the commissary. He believed then that such Negroes as did well in these more humble positions should be made citizens and soldiers.²⁴ As a matter of fact out of this very suggestion came the policy of arming the Negroes, the first regiment of whom was recruited under orders issued by General Hunter at Port Royal, South Carolina in 1862. As the arming of the slave to participate in this war did not generally please the white people who considered the struggle a war between civilized groups, this policy could not offer general relief to the congested contraband camps.²⁵

A better system of handling the fugitives was finally worked out, however, with a general superintendent at the head of each department, supported by a number of competent assistants. More explicit instructions were given as to the manner of dealing with the situation. It was to

²⁴ Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, p. 15.

²⁵ Williams, *Negro in the Rebellion*, pp. 90-98.

be the duty of the superintendent of contrabands, says the order, to organize them into working parties in saving the cotton, as pioneers on railroads and steamboats, and in any way where their services could be made available. Where labor was performed for private individuals they were charged in accordance with the orders of the commander of the department. In case they were directed to save abandoned crops of cotton for the benefit of the United States Government, the officer selling such crops would turn over to the superintendent of contrabands the proceeds of the sale, which together with other earnings were used for clothing and feeding the Negroes. Clothing sent by philanthropic persons to these camps was received and distributed by the superintendent. In no case, however, were Negroes to be forced into the service of the United States Government or to be enticed away from their homes except when it became a military necessity.²⁶

Some order out of the chaos eventually developed, for as John Eaton, one of the workers in the West, reported: "There was no promiscuous intermingling. Families were established by themselves. Every man took care of his own wife and children." "One of the most touching features of our Work," says he, "was

²⁶ *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, VII, pp. 503, 510, 560, 595, 628, 668, 698, 699, 711, 723, 739, 741, 757, 769, 787, 801, 802, 811, 818, 842, 923, 934; VIII, pp. 444, 445, 451, 464, 555, 556, 564, 584, 637, 642, 686, 690, 693, 825.

the eagerness with which colored men and women availed themselves of the opportunities offered them to legalize unions already formed, some of which had been in existence for a long time.”²⁷ “Chaplain A. S. Fiske on one occasion married in about an hour one hundred and nineteen couples at one service, chiefly those who had long lived together.” Letters from the Virginia camps and from those of Port Royal indicate that this favorable condition generally obtained.²⁸

This unusual problem in spite of additional effort, however, would not readily admit of solution. Benevolent workers of the North, therefore, began to minister to the needs of these unfortunate blacks. They sent considerable sums of money, increasing quantities of clothing and even some of their most devoted men and women to toil among them as social workers and teachers.²⁹ These efforts also took organized form in various parts of the North under the direction of *The Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association*, *The Tract Society*, *The American Missionary Association*, *Pennsylvania Friends Freedmen's Relief Association*, *Old School Presbyterian Mission*, *The Reformed Presbyterian Mission*, *The New England Freedmen's*

²⁷ Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, pp. 34–35.

²⁸ Ames, *From a New England Woman's Diary*, *passim*; and Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal*, *passim*.

²⁹ Ames, *From a New England Woman's Diary in 1865*, *passim*.

*Aid Committee, The New England Freedmen's Aid Society, The New England Freedmen's Mission, The Washington Christian Union, The Universalists of Maine, The New York Freedmen's Relief Association, The Hartford Relief Society, The National Freedmen's Relief Association of the District of Columbia, and finally the Freedmen's Bureau.*³⁰

As an outlet to the congested grouping of Negroes and poor whites in the war camps it was arranged to send a number of them to the loyal States as fast as there presented themselves opportunities for finding homes and employment. Cairo, Illinois, in the West, became the center of such activities extending its ramifications into all parts of the invaded southern territory. Some of the refugees permanently settled in the North, taking up the work abandoned by the northern soldiers who went to war.³¹ It was soon found necessary to appoint a superintendent of such affairs at Cairo, for there were those who, desiring to lead a straggling life, had to be restrained from crime by military surveillance and regulations requiring labor for self-support. Exactly how many whites and blacks were thus aided to reach northern communities cannot be determined but in view of the frequent mention of their movements by travellers the number

³⁰ *Special Report of the United States Commissioner of Education on the Schools of the District of Columbia*, p. 217.

³¹ Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, p. 37.

must have been considerable. In some cases, as in Lawrence, Kansas, there were assembled enough freedmen to constitute a distinct group.³² Speaking of this settlement the editor of the *Alton Telegraph* said in 1862 that although they amounted to many hundreds not one, that he could learn of, had been a public charge. They readily found employment at fair wages, and soon made themselves comfortable.³³

There was a little apprehension that the North would be overrun by such blacks. Some had no such fear, however, for the reason that the census did not indicate such a movement. Many slaves were freed in the North prior to 1860, yet with all the emigration from the slave States to the North there were then in all the Northern States but 226,152 free blacks, while there were in the slave States 261,918, an excess of 35,766 in the slave States. Frederick Starr believed that during the Civil War there might be an influx for a few months but it would not continue.³⁴ They would return when sure that they would be free. Starr thought that, if necessary, these refugees might be used in building the much desired Pacific Railroad to divert them from the North.³⁵

³² Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, p. 38.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁴ Starr, *What shall be done with the People of Color in the United States*, p. 25; Ward, *Contrabands*, pp. 3, 4.

³⁵ It is said that Lincoln suggested colonizing the contrabands in South America.

There was little ground for this apprehension, in fact, if their readjustment and development in the contraband camps could be considered an indication of what the Negroes would eventually do. Taking all things into consideration, most unbiased observers felt that blacks in the camps deserved well of their benefactors.³⁶ According to Levi Coffin, these contrabands were, in 1864, disposed of as follows: "In military services as soldiers, laundresses, cooks, officers' servants and laborers in the various staff departments, 41,150; in cities, on plantations and in freedmen's villages and cared for, 72,500. Of these 62,300 were entirely self-supporting, just as any industrial class anywhere else, as planters, mechanics, barbers, hackmen and draymen, conducting enterprises on their own responsibility or working as hired laborers." The remaining 10,200 received subsistence from the government. 3,000 of these were members of families whose heads were carrying on plantations, and had undertaken cultivation of 4,000 acres of cotton, pledging themselves to pay the government for their subsistence from the first income of the crop. The other 7,200 included the paupers, that is, all Negroes over and under the self-supporting age, the crippled and sick in hospitals. This class, however, instead of being unproductive, had then under cultivation 500 acres of corn, 790

³⁶ *Atlantic Monthly*, XII, p. 308.

acres of vegetables, and 1,500 acres of cotton, besides working at wood chopping and other industries. There were reported in the aggregate over 100,000 acres of cotton under cultivation, 7,000 acres of which were leased and cultivated by blacks. Some Negroes were managing as many as 300 or 400 acres each.³⁷ Statistics showing exactly how much the numbers of contrabands in the various branches of the service increased are wanting, but in view of the fact that the few thousand soldiers here given increased to about 200,000 before the close of the Civil War, the other numbers must have been considerable, if they all grew the least proportionately.

Much industry was shown among these refugees. Under this new system they acquired the idea of ownership, and of the security of wages and learned to see the fundamental difference between freedom and slavery. Some Yankees, however, seeing that they did less work than did laborers in the North, considered them lazy, but the lack of industry was customary in the South and a river should not be expected to rise higher than its source. One of their superintendents said that they worked well without being urged, that there was among them a public opinion against idleness, which answered for discipline, and that those put to work with soldiers labored longer and did the

³⁷ Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences*, p. 671.

nicer parts. "In natural tact and the faculty of getting a livelihood," says the same writer, "the contrabands are inferior to the Yankees, but quite equal to the mass of southern population."³⁸ The Negroes also showed capacity to organize labor and use capital in the promotion of enterprises. Many of them purchased land and cultivated it to great profit both to the community and to themselves. Others entered the service of the government as mechanics and contractors, from the employment of which some of them realized handsome incomes.

The more important development, however, was that of manhood. This was best observed in their growing consciousness of rights, and their readiness to defend them, even when encroached upon by members of the white race. They quickly learned to appreciate freedom and exhibited evidences of manhood in their desire for the comforts and conveniences of life. They readily purchased articles of furniture within their means, bringing their home equipment up to the standard of that of persons similarly circumstanced. The indisposition to labor was overcome "in a healthy nature by instinct and motives of superior forces, such as love of life, the desire to be clothed and fed, the sense of security derived from provision for the future, the feeling of self-respect, the love of family and children and the convictions of duty."³⁹

³⁸ *Atlantic Monthly*, XII, p. 309.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, XII, pp. 310-311.

These enterprises, begun in doubt, soon ceased to be a bare hope or possibility. They became during the war a fruition and a consummation, in that they produced Negroes "who would work for a living and fight for freedom." They were, therefore, considered "adapted to civil society." They had "shown capacity for knowledge, for free industry, for subordination to law and discipline, for soldierly fortitude, for social and family relations, for religious culture and aspiration. These qualities," said the observer, "when stirred, and sustained by the incitements and rewards of a just society, and combining with the currents of our continental civilization, will, under the guidance of a benevolent Providence which forgets neither them nor us, make them a constantly progressive race; and secure them ever after from the calamity of another enslavement, and ourselves from the worst calamity of being their oppressors."⁴⁰

It is clear that these smaller numbers of Negroes under favorable conditions could be easily adjusted to a new environment. When, however, all Negroes were declared free there set in a confused migration which was much more of a problem. The first thing the Negro did after realizing that he was free was to roam over the country to put his freedom to a test. To do this, according to many writers, he fre-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

quently changed his name, residence, employment and wife, sometimes carrying with him from the plantation the fruits of his own labor. Many of them easily acquired a dog and a gun and were disposed to devote their time to the chase until the assistance in the form of mules and land expected from the government materialized. Their emancipation, therefore, was interpreted not only as freedom from slavery but from responsibility.⁴¹ Where they were going they did not know but the towns and cities became very attractive to them.

Speaking of this upheaval in Virginia, Eckenrode says that many of them roamed over the country without restraint.⁴² "Released from their accustomed bonds," says Hall, "and filled with a pleasing, if not vague, sense of uncontrolled freedom, they flocked to the cities with little hope of obtaining remunerative work. Wagon loads of them were brought in from the country by the soldiers and dumped down to shift for themselves."⁴³ Referring to the proclamation of freedom, in Georgia, Thompson asserts that their most general and universal response was to pick up and leave the home place to go somewhere else, preferably to a town. The lure of the city was strong to the blacks, appealing to their social natures, to their inherent love

⁴¹ Hamilton, *Reconstruction in North Carolina*, pp. 156, 157.

⁴² Eckenrode, *Political History of Virginia during the Reconstruction*, p. 42.

⁴³ Hall, *Andrew Johnson*, p. 258.

for a crowd."⁴⁴ Davis maintains that thousands of the 70,000 Negroes in Florida crowded into the Federal military camps and into towns upon realizing that they were free.⁴⁵ According to Ficklen, the exodus of the slaves from the neighboring plantations of Louisiana into Baton Rouge, Carrollton and New Orleans was so great as to strain the resources of the Federal authorities to support them. Ten thousand poured into New Orleans alone.⁴⁶ Fleming records that upon leaving their homes the blacks collected in gangs at the cross roads, in the villages and towns, especially near the military posts. The towns were filled with crowds of blacks who left their homes with absolutely nothing, "thinking that the government would care for them, or more probably, not thinking at all."⁴⁷

The portrayal of these writers of this phase of Reconstruction history contains a general truth, but in some cases the picture is over-drawn. The student of history must bear in mind that practically all of our histories of that period are based altogether on the testimony of prejudiced whites and are written from their point of view. Some of these writers have aimed to exaggerate the vagrancy of the blacks

⁴⁴ Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Davis, *Reconstruction in Florida*, p. 341.

⁴⁶ Ficklen, *History of Reconstruction in Louisiana*, p. 118.

⁴⁷ Fleming, *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, p. 271.

to justify the radical procedure of the whites in dealing with it. The Negroes did wander about thoughtlessly, believing that this was the most effective way to enjoy their freedom. But nothing else could be expected from a class who had never felt anything but the heel of oppression. History shows that such vagrancy has always followed the immediate emancipation of a large number of slaves. Many Negroes who flocked to the towns and army camps, moreover, had like their masters and poor whites seen their homes broken up or destroyed by the invading Union armies. Whites who had never learned to work were also roaming and in some cases constituted marauding bands.⁴⁸

There was, moreover, an actual drain of laborers to the lower and more productive lands in Mississippi and Louisiana.⁴⁹ This developed later into a more considerable movement toward the Southwest just after the Civil War, the exodus being from South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi to Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas. Here was the pioneering spirit, a going to the land of more economic opportunities. This slow movement continued from about 1865 to 1875, when the development of the numerous railway systems gave rise to land speculators who induced whites and blacks to go west and southwest. It was a migration of in-

⁴⁸ Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia*, p. 69.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

dividuals, but it was reported that as many as 35,000 Negroes were then persuaded to leave South Carolina and Georgia for Arkansas and Texas.⁵⁰

The usual charge that the Negro is naturally migratory is not true. This impression is often received by persons who hear of the thousands of Negroes who move from one place to another from year to year because of the desire to improve their unhappy condition. In this there is no tendency to migrate but an urgent need to escape undesirable conditions. In fact, one of the American Negroes' greatest shortcomings is that they are not sufficiently pioneering. Statistics show that the whites have more inclination to move from State to State than the Negro. To prove this assertion,⁵¹ Professor William O. Scroggs has shown that, in 1910, 16.6 per cent of the Negroes had moved to some other State than that in which they were born, while during the same period 22.4 per cent of the whites had done the same.⁵²

The South, however, was not disposed to look at the vagrancy of the ex-slaves so philosophically. That section had been devastated by

⁵⁰ This exodus became considerable again in 1888 and 1889 and the Negro population has continued in this direction of plentitude of land including not only Arkansas and Texas but Louisiana and Oklahoma, all which received in this way by 1900 about 200,000 Negroes.

⁵¹ *American Journal of Political Economy*, XXII, pp. 10, 40.

⁵² *Ibid.*, XXV, p. 1038.

war and to rebuild these waste places reliable labor was necessary. Legislatures of the slave States, therefore, immediately after the close of the war, granted the Negro nominal freedom but enacted measures of vagrancy and labor so as to reduce the Negro again almost to the status of a slave. White magistrates were given wide discretion in adjudging Negroes vagrants.⁵³ Negroes had to sign contracts to work. If without what was considered a just cause the Negro left the employ of a planter, the former could be arrested and forced to work and in some sections with ball and chain. If the employer did not care to take him back he could be hired out by the county or confined in jail. Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina had further drastic features. By local ordinance in Louisiana every Negro had to be in the service of some white person, and by special laws of South Carolina and Mississippi the Negro became subject to a master almost in the same sense in which he was prior to emancipation.⁵⁴ These laws, of course, convinced the government of the United States that the South had not yet decided to let slavery go and for that reason military rule and Congressional Reconstruction followed. In this respect the South did itself a great injury, for many of the provisions of the black codes, especially the vagrancy

⁵³ Mecklin, *Black Codes*.

⁵⁴ Dunning, *Reconstruction*, pp. 54, 59, 110.

laws, were unnecessary. Most Negroes soon realized that freedom did not mean relief from responsibility and they quickly settled down to work after a rather protracted and exciting holiday.⁵⁵

During the last year of and immediately after the Civil War there set in another movement, not of a large number of Negroes but of the intelligent class who had during years of residence in the North enjoyed such advantages of contact and education as to make them desirable and useful as leaders in the Reconstruction of the South and the remaking of the race. In their tirades against the Carpet-bag politicians who handled the Reconstruction situation so much to the dissatisfaction of the southern whites, historians often forget to mention also that a large number of the Negro leaders who participated in that drama were also natives or residents of Northern States.

Three motives impelled these blacks to go South. Some had found northern communities so hostile as to impede their progress, many wanted to rejoin relatives from whom they had been separated by their flight from the land of slavery, and others were moved by the spirit of adventure to enter a new field ripe with all sorts of opportunities. This movement, together with that of migration to large urban communities, largely accounts for the depopulation and the

⁵⁵ DuBois, *Freedmen's Bureau*.

consequent decline of certain colored communities in the North after 1865.

Some of the Negroes who returned to the South became men of national prominence. William J. Simmons, who prior to the Civil War was carried from South Carolina to Pennsylvania, returned to do religious and educational work in Kentucky. Bishop James W. Hood, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church went from Connecticut to North Carolina to engage in similar work. Honorable R. T. Greene, the first Negro graduate of Harvard, went from Philadelphia to teach in the District of Columbia and later to be a professor in the University of South Carolina. F. L. Cardoza, educated at the University of Edinburgh, returned to South Carolina and became State Treasurer. R. . Elliot, born in Boston and educated in England settled in South Carolina from which he was sent to Congress.

*Jacob Caw.
Josephine
and S. Caro.
laughable
. women.*

John M. Langston was taken to Ohio and educated but came back to Virginia his native State from which he was elected to Congress. J. White left Indiana to enter politics in Arkansas becoming State Senator and later Commissioner of public works and internal improvement. Judge Mifflin Wister Gibbs, a native of Philadelphia, purposely settled in Arkansas where he served as city judge and Register of United States Land Office. T. Morris Chester, of Pittsburgh, finally made his way to Louisiana where

he served with distinction as a lawyer and held the position of Brigadier-General in charge of the Louisiana State Guards under the Kellogg government. Joseph Carter Corbin, who was taken from Virginia to be educated at Chillicothe, Ohio, went later to Arkansas where he served as chief clerk in the post office at Little Rock and later as State Superintendent of Schools. Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback, who moved north for education and opportunity, returned to enter politics in Louisiana, which honored him with several important positions among which was that of Acting Governor.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXODUS TO THE WEST

HAVING come through the halcyon days of the Reconstruction only to find themselves reduced almost to the status of slaves, many Negroes deserted the South for the promising west to grow up with the country. The immediate causes were doubtless political. *Bulldozing*, a rather vague term, covering all such crimes as political injustice and persecution, was the source of most complaint. The abridgment of the Negroes' rights had affected them as a great calamity. They had learned that voting is one of the highest privileges to be obtained in this life and they wanted to go where they might still exercise that privilege. That persecution was the main cause was disputed, however, as there were cases of Negroes migrating from parts where no such conditions obtained. Yet some of the whites giving their version of the situation admitted that violent methods had been used so to intimidate the Negroes as to compel them to vote according to the dictation of the whites. It was also learned that the *bulldozers* concerned in dethroning the non-taxpaying blacks were an impecunious and irrespon-

sible group themselves, led by men of the wealthy class.¹

Coming to the defense of the whites, some said that much of the persecution with which the blacks were afflicted was due to the fear of Negro uprisings, the terror of the days of slavery. The whites, however, did practically nothing to remove the underlying causes. They did not encourage education and made no efforts to cure the Negroes of faults for which slavery itself was to be blamed and consequently could not get the confidence of the blacks. The races tended rather to drift apart. The Negroes lived in fear of reenslavement while the whites believed that the war between the North and South would soon be renewed. Some Negroes thinking likewise sought to go to the North to be among friends. The blacks, of course, had come so to regard southern whites as their enemies as to render impossible a voluntary division in politics.

Among the worst of all faults of the whites was their unwillingness to labor and their tendency to do mischief.² As there were so many to live on the labor of the Negroes they were reduced to a state a little better than that of bondage. The master class was generally unfair to the blacks. No longer responsible for them as slaves, the planters endeavored after the war to

¹ *Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, p. 222; *Nation*, XXVIII, pp. 242, 386.

² Thompson, *Reconstruction in Georgia*, p. 69.

get their labor for nothing. The Negroes themselves had no land, no mules, no presses nor cotton gins, and they could not acquire sufficient capital to obtain these things. They were made victims of fraud in signing contracts which they could not understand and had to suffer the consequent privations and want aggravated by robbery and murder by the Ku Klux Klan.³

The murder of Negroes was common throughout the South and especially in Louisiana. In 1875, General Sheridan said that as many as 3,500 persons had been killed and wounded in that State, the great majority of whom being Negroes; that 1,884 were killed and wounded in 1868, and probably 1,200 between 1868 and 1875. Frightful massacres occurred in the parishes of Bossier, Catahoula, Saint Bernard, Grant and Orleans. As most of these murders were for political reasons, the offenders were regarded by their communities as heroes rather than as criminals. A massacre of Negroes began in the parish of St. Landry on the 28th of September and continued for three days, resulting in the death of from 300 to 400. Thirteen captives were taken from the jail and shot and as many as twenty-five dead bodies were found burned in the woods. There broke out in the parish of Boissier another three-day riot during which two hundred Negroes were massacred. More than forty blacks were killed in the parish of

³ Williams, *History of the Negro Race*, II, p. 375.

Caddo during the following month. In fact, the number of murders, maimings and whippings during these months aggregated over one thousand.⁴ The result was that the intelligent Negroes were either intimidated or killed so that the illiterate masses of Negro voters might be ordered to refrain from voting the Republican ticket to strengthen the Democrats or be subjected to starvation through the operation of the mischievous land tenure and credit system. What was not done in 1868 to overthrow the Republican regime was accomplished by a renewed and extended use of such drastic measures throughout the South in 1876.

Certain whites maintained, however, that the unrest was due to the work of radical politicians at the North, who had sent their emissaries south to delude the Negroes into a fever of migration. Some said it was a scheme to force the nomination of a certain Republican candidate for President in 1880. Others laid it to the charge of the defeated white and black Republicans who had been thrown from power by the whites upon regaining control of the reconstructed States.⁵ A few insisted that a speech delivered by Senator Windom in 1879 had given stimulus to the migration.⁶ Many southerners said that speculators in Kansas had adopted

⁴ Williams, *History of the Negro Race*, II, p. 374.

⁵ *American Journal of Social Science*, XI, p. 34.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XI, p. 33.

this plan to increase the value of their land. Then there were other theories as to the fundamental causes, each consisting of a charge of one political faction that some other had given rise to the movement, varying according as they were Bourbons, conservatives, native white Republicans, carpet-bag Republicans, or black Republicans.

Impartial observers, however, were satisfied that the movement was spontaneous to the extent that the blacks were ready and willing to go. Probably no more inducement was offered them than to other citizens among whom land companies sent agents to distribute literature. But the fundamental causes of the unrest were economic, for since the Civil War race troubles have never been sufficient to set in motion a large number of Negroes. The discontent resulted from the land-tenure and credit systems, which had restored slavery in a modified form.⁷

After the Civil War a few Negroes in those parts, where such opportunities were possible, invested in real estate offered for sale by the impoverished and ruined planters of the conquered commonwealths. When, however, the Negroes lost their political power, their property was seized on the plea for delinquent taxes and they were forced into the ghetto of towns and cities, as it became a crime punishable by social

⁷ *Nation*, XXVIII, pp. 242, 386.

proscription to sell Negroes desirable residences. The aim was to debase all Negroes to the status of menial labor in conformity with the usual contention of the South that slavery is the normal condition of the blacks.⁸

Most of the land of the South, however, always remained as large tracts held by the planters of cotton, who never thought of alienating it to the Negroes to make them a race of small farmers. In fact, they had not the means to make extensive purchases of land, even if the planters had been disposed to transfer it. Still subject to the experimentation of white men, the Negroes accepted the plan of paying them wages; but this failed in all parts except in the sugar district, where the blacks remained contented save when disturbed by political movements. They then tried all systems of working on shares in the cotton districts; but this was finally abandoned because the planters in some cases were not able to advance the Negro tenant supplies, pending the growth of the crop, and some found the Negro too indifferent and lazy to make the partnership desirable. Then came the renting system which during the Reconstruction period was general in the cotton districts. This system threw the tenant on his own responsibility and frequently made him the victim of his own ignorance and the rapacity of the white man. As exorbitant prices were charged

⁸ Williams, *History of the Negro Race*, II, p. 378.

for rent, usually six to ten dollars an acre for land worth fifteen to thirty dollars an acre, the Negro tenant not only did not accumulate anything but had reason to rejoice at the end of the year, if he found himself out of debt.⁹

Along with this went the credit system which furnished the capstone of the economic structure so harmful to the Negro tenant. This system made the Negroes dependent for their living on an advance of supplies of food, clothing or tools during the year, secured by a lien on the crop when harvested. As the Negroes had no chance to learn business methods during the days of slavery, they fell a prey to a class of loan sharks, harpies and vampires, who established stores everywhere to extort from these ignorant tenants by the mischievous credit system their whole income before their crops could be gathered.¹⁰ Some planters who sympathized with the Negroes brought forward the scheme of protecting them by advancing certain necessities at more reasonable prices. As the planter himself, however, was subject to usury, the scheme did not give much relief. The Negroes' crop, therefore, when gathered went either to the merchant or to the planter to pay the rent; for the merchant's supplies were secured by a mortgage on the tenant's personal property and a pledge of the growing crop. This often prevented Negro

⁹ *Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, p. 225.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

laborers in the employ of black tenants from getting their wages at the end of the year, for, although the laborer had also a lien on the growing crop, the merchant and the planter usually had theirs recorded first and secured thereby the support of the law to force the payment of their claims. The Negro tenant then began the year with three mortgages, covering all he owned, his labor for the coming year and all he expected to acquire during that twelvemonth. He paid "one-third of his product for the use of the land, he paid an exorbitant fee for recording the contract by which he paid his pound of flesh; he was charged two or three times as much as he ought to pay for ginning his cotton; and, finally, he turned over his crop to be eaten up in commissions, if any was still left to him."¹¹

The worst of all results from this iniquitous system was its effect on the Negroes themselves. It made the Negroes extravagant and unscrupulous. Convinced that no share of their crop would come to them when harvested, they did not exert themselves to produce what they could. They often abandoned their crops before harvest, knowing that they had already spent them. In cases, however, where the Negro tenants had acquired mules, horses or tools upon which the speculator had a mortgage, the blacks were actually bound to their landlords to secure the property. It was soon evident that in the end the

¹¹ *Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV, p. 224.

white man himself was the loser by this evil system. There appeared waste places in the country. Improvements were wanting, land lay idle for lack of sufficient labor, and that which was cultivated yielded a diminishing return on account of the ignorance and improvidence of those tilling it. These Negroes as a rule had lost the ambition to become landowners, preferring to invest their surplus money in personal effects; and in the few cases where the Negroes were induced to undertake the buying of land, they often tired of the responsibility and gave it up.¹²

There began in the spring of 1879, therefore, an emigration of the Negroes from Louisiana and Mississippi to Kansas. For some time there was a stampede from several river parishes in Louisiana and from counties just opposite them in Mississippi. It was estimated that from five to ten thousand left their homes before the movement could be checked. Persons of influence soon busied themselves in showing the blacks the necessity for remaining in the South and those who had not then gone or prepared to go were persuaded to return to the plantations. This lull in the excitement, however, was merely temporary, for many Negroes had merely returned home to make more extensive preparations for leaving the following spring. The movement was accelerated by the

¹² *The Atlantic Monthly*, XLIV, p. 223.

work of two Negro leaders of some note, Moses Singleton, of Tennessee, the self-styled Moses of the Exodus; and Henry Adams, of Louisiana, who credited himself with having organized for this purpose as many as 98,000 blacks.

Taking this movement seriously a convention of the leading whites and blacks was held at Vicksburg, Mississippi, on the sixth of May, 1879. This body was controlled mainly by unsympathetic but diplomatic whites. General N. R. Miles, of Yazoo County, Mississippi, was elected president and A. W. Crandall, of Louisiana, secretary. After making some meaningless but eloquent speeches the convention appointed a committee on credentials and adjourned until the following day. On reassembling Colonel W. L. Nugent, chairman of the committee, presented a certain preamble and resolutions citing causes of the exodus and suggesting remedies. Among the causes, thought he, were: "the low price of cotton and the partial failure of the crop, the irrational system of planting adopted in some sections whereby labor was deprived of intelligence to direct it and the presence of economy to make it profitable, the vicious system of credit fostered by laws permitting laborers and tenants to mortgage crops before they were grown or even planted; the apprehension on the part of many colored people produced by insidious reports circulated among them that their civil and polit-

ical rights were endangered or were likely to be; the hurtful and false rumors diligently disseminated, that by emigrating to Kansas the Negroes would obtain lands, mules and money from the government without cost to themselves, and become independent forever.'¹³

Referring to the grievances and proposing a redress, the committee admitted that errors had been committed by the whites and blacks alike, as each in turn had controlled the government of the States there represented. The committee believed that the interests of planters and laborers, landlords and tenants were identical; that they must prosper or suffer together; and that it was the duty of the planters and landlords of the State there represented to devise and adopt some contract by which both parties would receive the full benefit of labor governed by intelligence and economy. The convention affirmed that the Negro race had been placed by the constitution of the United States and the States there represented, and the laws thereof, on a plane of absolute equality with the white race; and declared that the Negro race should be accorded the practical enjoyment of all civil and political rights guaranteed by the said constitutions and laws. The convention pledged itself to use whatever of power and influence it possessed to protect the Negro race against all dangers in respect to the fair expression of their

¹³ *The Vicksburg Daily Commercial*, May 6, 1879.

wills at the polls, which they apprehended might result from fraud, intimidation or *bulldozing* on the part of the whites. And as there could be no liberty of action without freedom of thought, they demanded that all elections should be fair and free and that no repressive measures should be employed by the Negroes "to deprive their own race in part of the fullest freedom in the exercise of the highest right of citizenship."¹⁴

The committee then recommended the abolition of the mischievous credit system, called upon the Negroes to contradict false reports as to crimes of the whites against them and, after considering the Negroes' right to emigrate, urged that they proceed about it with reason. Ex-Governor Foote, of Mississippi, submitted a plan to establish in every county a committee, composed of men who had the confidence of both whites and blacks, to be auxiliary to the public authorities, to listen to complaints and arbitrate, advise, conciliate or prosecute, as each case should demand. But unwilling to do more than make temporary concessions, the majority rejected Foote's plan.¹⁵

The whites thought also to stop the exodus by inducing the steamboat lines not to furnish the emigrants transportation. Negroes were also detained by writs obtained by preferring

¹⁴ *The Vicksburg Daily Commercial*, May 6, 1879.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, May 6, 1879.

against them false charges. Some, who were willing to let the Negroes go, thought of importing white and Chinese labor to take their places. Hearing of the movement and thinking that he could offer a remedy, Senator D. W. Voorhees, of Indiana, introduced a resolution in the United States Senate authorizing an inquiry into the causes of the exodus.¹⁶ The movement, however, could not be stopped and it became so widespread that the people in general were forced to give it serious thought. Men in favor of it declared their views, organized migration societies and appointed agents to promote the enterprise of removing the freedmen from the South.

Becoming a national measure, therefore, the migration evoked expressions from Frederick Douglass and Richard T. Greener, two of the most prominent Negroes in the United States. Douglass believed that the exodus was ill-timed. He saw in it the abandonment of the great principle of protection to persons and property in every State of the Union. He felt that if the Negroes could not be protected in every State, the Federal Government was shorn of its rightful dignity and power, the late rebellion had triumphed, the sovereign of the nation was an empty vessel, and the power and authority in individual States were supreme. He thought,

¹⁶ *Congressional Record*, 46th Congress, 2d Session, Vol. X, p. 104.

therefore, that it was better for the Negroes to stay in the South than to go North, as the South was a better market for the black man's labor. Douglass believed that the Negroes should be warned against a nomadic life. He did not see any more benefit in the migration to Kansas than he had years before in the emigration to Africa. The Negroes had a monopoly of labor at the South and they would be too insignificant in numbers to have such an advantage in the North. The blacks were then potentially able to elect members of Congress in the South but could not hope to exercise such power in other parts. Douglass believed, moreover, that this exodus did not conform to the "laws of civilizing migration," as the carrying of a language, literature and the like of a superior race to an inferior; and it did not conform to the geographic laws assuring healthy migration from east to west in the same latitude, as this was from south to north, far away from the climate in which the migrants were born.¹⁷

The exodus of the Negroes, however, was heartily endorsed by Richard T. Greener. He did not consider it the best remedy for the lawlessness of the South but felt that it was a salutary one. He did not expect the United States to give the oppressed blacks in the South the protection they needed, as there is no abstract

¹⁷ For a detailed statement of Douglass's views, see the *American Journal of Social Science*, XI, pp. 1-21.

limit to the right of a State to do anything. He would not encourage the Negro to lead a wandering life but in that instance such advice was gratuitous. Greener failed to find any analogy between African colonization and migration to the West as the former was promoted by slave-holders to remove the free Negro from the country and the other sprang spontaneously from the class considering itself aggrieved. "One led out of the country to a comparative wilderness; the other directed to a better land and larger opportunities." He did not see how the migration to the North would diminish the potentiality of the Negro in politics, for Massachusetts first elected Negroes to her General Court, Ohio had nominated a Negro representative and Illinois another. He showed also that Mr. Douglass's objection on the grounds of migrating from south to north rather than from east to west was not historical. He thought little of the advice to the Negroes to stick and fight it out, for he had evidence that the return of the unreconstructed Confederates to power in the South would for generations doom the blacks to political oppression unknown in the annals of a free country.

Greener showed foresight here in urging the Negroes to take up desirable western land before it would be preempted by foreigners. As the Swedes, Norwegians, Irish, Hebrews and others were organizing societies and raising

funds to promote the migration of their needy to these lands, why should the Negroes be debarred? Greener had no apprehension as to the treatment the Negroes would receive in the West. He connected the movement too with the general welfare of the blacks, considering it a promising sign that they had learned to run from persecution. Having passed their first stage, that of appealing to philanthropists, the Negroes were then appealing to themselves.¹⁸

Feeling very much as Greener did, these Negroes rushed into Kansas and neighboring States in 1879. So many came that some systematic relief had to be offered. Mrs. Comstock, a Quaker lady, organized for this purpose the Kansas Freedmen's Relief Association, to raise funds and secure for them food and clothing. In this work she had the support of Governor J. P. Saint John. There was much suffering upon arriving in Kansas but relief came from various sources. During this year \$40,000 and 500,000 pounds of clothing, bedding and the like were used. England contributed 50,000 pounds of goods and \$8,000. In 1879, the refugees took up 20,000 acres of land and brought 3,000 under cultivation. The Relief Association at first furnished them with supplies, teams and seed, which they profitably used in the production of large crops. Desiring to establish homes, they built 300 cabins and saved \$30,000 the first

¹⁸ *American Journal of Social Science*, XI, pp. 22-35.

year. In April, 1,300 refugees had gathered around Wyandotte alone. Up to that date 60,000 had come to Kansas, nearly 40,000 of whom arrived in destitute condition. About 30,000 settled in the country, some on rented lands and others on farms as laborers, leaving about 25,000 in cities, where on account of crowded conditions and the hard weather many greatly suffered. Upon finding employment, however, they all did well, most of them becoming self-supporting within one year after their arrival, and few of them coming back to the Relief Association for aid the second time.¹⁹ This was especially true of those in Topeka, Parsons and Kansas City.

The people of Kansas did not encourage the blacks to come. They even sent messengers to the South to advise the Negroes not to migrate and, if they did come anyway, to provide themselves with equipment. When they did arrive, however, they welcomed and assisted them as human beings. Under such conditions the blacks established five or six important colonies in Kansas alone between 1879 and 1880. Chief among these were Baxter Springs, Nicodemus, Morton City and Singleton. Governor Saint John, of Kansas, reported that they seemed to be honest and of good habits, were certainly industrious and anxious to work, and so far as they had been tried had proved to be faithful

¹⁹ Williams, *History of the Negro*, II, p. 379.

and excellent laborers. Giving his observations there, Sir George Campbell bore testimony to the same report.²⁰ Out of these communities have come some most progressive black citizens. In consideration of their desirability their white neighbors have given them their cooperation, secured to them the advantages of democratic education, and honored a few of them with some of the most important positions in the State.

Although the greater number of these blacks went to Kansas, about 5,000 of them sought refuge in other Western States. During these years, Negroes gradually invaded Indian Territory and increased the number already infiltrated into and assimilated by the Indian nations. When assured of their friendly attitude toward the Indians, the Negroes were accepted by them as equals, even during the days of slav-

²⁰ "In Kansas City," said Sir George Campbell, "and still more in the suburbs of Kansas proper the Negroes are much more numerous than I have yet seen. On the Kansas side they form quite a large proportion of the population. They are certainly subject to no indignity or ill usage. There the Negroes seem to have quite taken to work at trades." He saw them doing building work, both alone and assisting white men, and also painting and other tradesmen's work. On the Kansas side, he found a Negro blacksmith, with an establishment of his own. He had come from Tennessee after emancipation. He had not been back there and did not want to go. He also saw black women keeping apple stalls and engaged in other such occupations so as to leave him under the impression that in the States, which he called intermediate between black and white countries the blacks evidently had no difficulty.—See *American Journal of Social Science*, XI, pp. 32, 33.

ery when the blacks on account of the cruelties of their masters escaped to the wilderness.²¹ Here we are at sea as to the extent to which this invasion and subsequent miscegenation of the black and red races extended for the reason that neither the Indians nor these migrating Negroes kept records and the United States Government has been disposed to classify all mixed breeds in tribes as Indians. Having equal opportunity among the red men, the Negroes easily succeeded. A traveler in Indian Territory in 1880 found their condition unusually favorable. The cosy homes and promising fields of these freedmen attracted his attention as striking evidences of their thrift. He saw new fences, additions to cabins, new barns, churches and school-houses indicating prosperity. Given every privilege which the Indians themselves enjoyed, the Negroes could not be other than contented.²²

It was very unfortunate, however, that in 1889, when by proclamation of President Harrison the Oklahoma Territory was thrown open, the intense race prejudice of the white immigrants and the rule of the mob prevented a larger number of Negroes from settling in that promising commonwealth. Long since extensively advertised as valuable, the land of Oklahoma had become a coveted prize for the adventurous squatters invading the territory in defiance of

²¹ *American Journal of Social Science*, XI, p. 33.

²² *Ibid.*, XI, p. 33.

the law before it was declared open for settlement. The rush came with all the excitement of pioneer days redoubled. Stakes were set, parcels of land were claimed, cabins were constructed in an hour and towns grew up in a day.²³ Then came conflicting claims as to titles and rights of preemption culminating in fighting and bloodshed. And worst of all, with this disorderly group there developed the fixed policy of eliminating the Negroes entirely.

The Negro, however, was not entirely excluded. Some had already come into the territory and others in spite of the barriers set up continued to come.²⁴ With the cooperation of the Indians, with whom they easily amalgamated, they readjusted themselves and acquired sufficient wealth to rise in the economic world. Although not generally fortunate, a number of them have coal and oil lands from which they obtain handsome incomes and a few, like Sara Rector, have actually become rich. Dishonest white men with the assistance of unprincipled officials have defrauded and are still endeavoring to defraud these Negroes of their property, lending them money secured by mortgages and obtaining for themselves through the courts appointments as the Negroes' guardians. They turn out to be the robbers of the Negroes,

²³ *Spectator*, LXVII, p. 571; *Dublin Review*, CV, p. 187; *Cosmopolitan*, VII, p. 460; *Nation*, LXVIII, p. 279.

²⁴ According to the *United States Census, of 1910*, there are 137,612 Negroes in Oklahoma.

in case they do not live in a community where an enlightened public opinion frowns down upon this crime.

During the later eighties and the early nineties there were some other interstate movements worthy of notice here. The mineral wealth of the Appalachian mountains was being exploited. Foreigners, at first, were coming into this country in sufficiently large numbers to meet the demand; but when this supply became inadequate, labor agents appealed to the blacks in the South. Negroes then flocked to the mining districts of Birmingham, Alabama, and to East Tennessee. A large number also migrated from North Carolina and Virginia to West Virginia and some few of the same group to Southern Ohio to take the places of those unreasonable strikers who often demanded larger increases in wages than the income of their employers could permit. Many of these Negroes came to West Virginia as is evidenced by the increase in Negro population of that State. West Virginia had a Negro population of 17,980 in 1870; 25,886 in 1880; 32,690 in 1890; 43,499 in 1900; and 64,173 in 1910.²⁵

²⁵ See *Censuses of the United States*.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MIGRATION OF THE TALENTED TENTH

IN spite of these interstate movements, the Negro still continued as a perplexing problem, for the country was unprepared to grant the race political and civil rights. Nominal equality was forced on the South at the point of the sword and the North reluctantly removed most of its barriers against the blacks. Some, still thinking, however, that the two races could not live together as equals, advocated ceding the blacks the region on the Gulf of Mexico.¹ This was branded as chimerical on the ground that, deprived of the guidance of the whites, these States would soon sink to African level and the end of the experiment would be a reconquest and a military regime fatal to the true development of American institutions.² Another plan proposed was the revival of the old colonization idea of sending Negroes to Africa, but this exhibited still less wisdom than the first in that it was based on the hypothesis of deporting a nation, an expense which no government would be willing to incur. There were then no physical means of transporting six or seven mil-

¹ Pike, *The Prostrate State*, pp. 3, 4.

² *Spectator*, LXVI, p. 113.

lions of people, moreover, as there would be a new born for every one the agents of colonization could deport.³

With the deportation scheme still kept before the people by the American Colonization Society, the idea of emigration to Africa did not easily die. Some Negroes continued to emigrate to Liberia from year to year. This policy was also favored by radicals like Senator Morgan, of Alabama, who, after movements like the Ku Klux Klan had done their work of intimidating Negroes into submission to the domination of the whites, concluded that most of the race believed that there was no future for the blacks in the United States and that they were willing to emigrate. These radicals advocated the deportation of the blacks to prevent the recurrence of "Negro domination." This plan was acceptable to the whites in general also, for, unlike the consensus of opinion of today, it was then thought that the South could get along without the Negro.⁴ Even newspapers like the *Charleston News and Courier*, which denounced the persecution of the Negroes, urged them to emigrate to Africa as they could not be permitted to rule over the white people. The *Minneapolis Times* wished the scheme success and

³ Frederick Douglass pointed out this difficulty prior to the Civil War.—See John Lobb's *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, p. 250.

⁴ Labor was then cheap in the South because of its abundance and the foreign laborer had not then been tried.

Godspeed and believed that the sooner it was carried out the better it would be for the Negroes.

Most of the influential newspapers of the country, however, urged the contrary. Citing the progress of the Negroes since emancipation to show that the blacks were doing their full share toward developing the wealth of the South, the *Indianapolis Journal* characterized as barbarism the suggestion that the government should furnish them transportation to Africa. "The ancestors of most of the Negroes now in this country," said the editor, "have doubtless been here as long as those of Senator Morgan, and their descendants are as thoroughly acclimated and have as good a right here as the Senator himself."⁵ This was the opinion of all useful Negroes except Bishop H. M. Turner, who endorsed Morgan's plan by advocating the emigration of one fourth of the blacks to Africa. The editor of the *Chicago Record-Herald* entreated Turner to temper his enthusiasm with discretion before he involved in unspeakable disaster any more of his trustful compatriots.

Speaking more plainly to the point, the editor of the *Philadelphia North American* said that the true interest of the South was to accommodate itself to changed conditions and that the

⁵ During these years Senator Morgan of Alabama was endeavoring to arouse the people of the country so as to make this a matter of national concern.

duty of the freedmen lies in making themselves worth more in the development of the South than they were as chattels. Although recognizing the disabilities and hardships of the South both to the whites and the blacks, he could not believe that the elimination of the Negroes would, if practicable, give relief.⁶ The *Boston Herald* inquired whether it was worth while to send away a laboring population in the absence of whites to take its place and referred to the misfortunes of Spain which undertook to carry out such a scheme. Speaking the real truth, *The Milwaukee Journal* said that no one needed to expect any appreciable decrease in the black population through any possible emigration, no matter how successful it might be. "The Negro," said the editor, "is here to stay and our institutions must be adapted to comprehend him and develop his possibilities." *The Colored American*, then the leading Negro organ of thought in the United States, believed that the Negroes should be thankful to Senator Morgan for his attitude on emigration, because he might succeed in deporting to Africa those Negroes who affect to believe that this is not their home and the more quickly we get rid of such foolhardy people the better it will be for the stalwart of the race.⁷

A number of Negroes, however, under the in-

⁶ *Public Opinion*, XVIII, p. 371.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XVIII, p. 371.

spiration of leaders⁸ like Bishop H. M. Turner, did not feel that the race had a fair chance in the United States. A few of them emigrated to Wapimo, Mexico; but, becoming dissatisfied with the situation there, they returned to their homes in Georgia and Alabama in 1895. The coming of the Negroes into Mexico caused suspicion and excitement. A newspaper, *El Tiempo*, which had been denouncing lynching in the United States, changed front when these Negroes arrived in that country.

Going in quest of new opportunities and desiring to reenforce the civilization of Liberia, 197 other Negroes sailed from Savannah, Georgia, for Liberia, March 19, 1895. Commending this step, the *Macon Telegraph* referred to their action as a rebellion against the social laws which govern all people of this country. This organ further said that it was the outcome of a feeling which has grown stronger and stronger year by year among the Negroes of the Southern States and which will continue to grow with the increase of education and intelligence among them. The editor conceded that they had an opportunity to better their material condition and acquire wealth here but contended that they had no chance to rise out of the peasant class. *The Memphis Commercial Appeal* urged the building of a large Negro nation in Africa as practicable and desirable, for it was "more

⁸ Simmons, *Men of Mark*, p. 817.

and more apparent that the Negro in this country must remain an alien and a disturber," because there was "not and can never be a future for him in this country." *The Florida Times Union* felt that this colonization scheme, like all others, was a fraud. It referred to the Negro's being carried to the land of plenty only to find out that there, as everywhere else in the world, an existence must be earned by toil and that his own old sunny southern home is vastly the better place.⁹

Only a few intelligent Negroes, however, had reached the position of being contented in the South. The Negroes eliminated from politics could not easily bring themselves around to thinking that they should remain there in a state of recognized inferiority, especially when during the eighties and nineties there were many evidences that economic as well as political conditions would become worse. The exodus treated in the previous chapter was productive of better treatment for the Negroes and an increase in their wages in certain parts of the South but the migration, contrary to the expectations of many, did not become general. Actual prosperity was impossible even if the whites had been willing to give the Negro peasants a fair chance. The South had passed through a disastrous war, the effects of which so blighted the hopes of its citizens in the economic world that

⁹ *Public Opinion*, XVIII, pp. 370-371.

their land seemed to pass, so to speak, through a dark age. There was then little to give the man far down when the one to whom he of necessity looked for employment was in his turn bled by the merchant or the banker of the larger cities, to whom he had to go for extensive credits.¹⁰

Southern planters as a class, however, had not much sympathy for the blacks who had once been their property and the tendency to cheat them continued, despite the fact that many farmers in the course of time extricated themselves from the clutches of the loan sharks. There were a few Negroes who, thanks to the honesty of certain southern gentlemen, succeeded in acquiring considerable property in spite of their handicaps.¹¹ They yielded to the white man's control in politics, when it seemed that it meant either to abandon that field or die, and devoted themselves to the accumulation of wealth and the acquisition of education.

This concession, however, did not satisfy the radical whites, as they thought that the Negro might some day return to power. Unfortunately, therefore, after the restoration of the control of the State governments to the master class, there swept over these commonwealths a

¹⁰ Because of these conditions the last fifty years has been considered by some writers as a "dark age," for the South.

¹¹ The Negroes are now said to be worth more than a billion dollars. Most of this property is in the hands of southern Negroes.

wave of hostile legislation demanded by the poor white uplanders determined to debase the blacks to the status of the free Negroes prior to the Civil War.¹² The Negroes have, therefore, been disfranchised in most reconstructed States, deprived of the privilege of serving in the State militia, segregated in public conveyances, and excluded from public places of entertainment. They have, moreover, been branded by public opinion as pariahs of society to be used for exploitation but not to be encouraged to expect that their status can ever be changed so as to destroy the barriers between the races in their social and political relations.

This period has been marked also by an effort to establish in the South a system of peonage not unlike that of Mexico, a sort of involuntary servitude in that one is considered legally bound to serve his master until a debt contracted is paid. Such laws have been enacted in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina. No such distinction in law has been able to stand the constitutional test of the United States courts as was evidenced by the decision of the Supreme Court in 1911 declaring the Alabama law unconstitutional.¹³ But the planters of the South, still a law unto themselves, have maintained actual slavery in

¹² *American Law Review*, XL, pp. 29, 52, 205, 227, 354, 381, 547, 590, 695, 758, 865, 905.

¹³ No. 300.—Original, October Term, 1910.

sequestered districts where public opinion against peonage is too weak to support federal authorities in exterminating it.¹⁴ The Negroes themselves dare not protest under penalty of persecution and the peon concerned usually accepts his lot like that of a slave. Some years ago it was commonly reported that in trying to escape, the persons undertaking it often fail and suffer death at the hands of the planter or of murderous mobs, giving as their excuse, if any be required, that the Negro is a desperado or some other sort of criminal.

Unfortunately this reaction extended also to education. Appropriations to public schools for Negroes diminished from year to year and when there appeared practical leaders with their sane plan for industrial education the South ignorantly accepted this scheme as a desirable subterfuge for seeming to support Negro education and at the same time directing the development of the blacks in such a way that they would never become the competitors of the white people. This was not these educators' idea but the South so understood it and in effecting the readjustment, practically left the Negroes out of the pale of the public school systems. Consequently, there has been added to the Negroes' misfortunes, in the South, that of being unable to obtain liberal education at public expense, although they themselves, as the largest

¹⁴ Hershaw, *Peonage*, pp. 10-11.

consumers in some parts, pay most of the taxes appropriated to the support of schools for the youth of the other race.¹⁵

The South, moreover, has adopted the policy of a more general intimidation of the Negroes to keep them down. The lynching of the blacks, at first for assaults on white women and later for almost any offense, has rapidly developed as an institution. Within the past fifty years¹⁶ there have been lynched in the South about 4,000 Negroes, many of whom have been publicly burned in the daytime to attract crowds that usually enjoy such feats as the tourney of the Middle Ages. Negroes who have the courage to protest against this barbarism have too often been subjected to indignities and in some cases forced to leave their communities or suffer the fate of those in behalf of whom they speak. These crimes of white men were at first kept secret but during the last two generations the culprits have become known as heroes, so popular has it been to murder Negroes. It has often been discovered also that the officers of these communities take part in these crimes and the worst of all is that politicians like Tillman, Blease and Vardaman glory in recounting the noble deeds of those who deserve so well of their countrymen for making the soil red with the Ne-

¹⁵ These facts are well brought out by Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones' recent report on Negro Education.

¹⁶ This is based on reports published annually in the *Chicago Tribune*.

groes' blood rather than permit the much feared Africanization of southern institutions.¹⁷

In this harassing situation the Negro has hoped that the North would interfere in his behalf, but, with the reactionary Supreme Court of the United States interpreting this hostile legislation as constitutional in conformity with the demands of prejudiced public opinion, and with the leaders of the North inclined to take the view that after all the factions in the South must be left alone to fight it out, there has been nothing to be expected from without. Matters too have been rendered much worse because the leaders of the very party recently abandoning the freedmen to their fate, aggravated the critical situation by first setting the Negroes against their former masters, whom they were taught to regard as their worst enemies whether they were or not.

The last humiliation the Negroes have been forced to submit to is that of segregation. Here the effort has been to establish a ghetto in cities and to assign certain parts of the country to Negroes engaged in farming. It always happens, of course, that the best portion goes to the whites and the least desirable to the blacks, although the promoters of the segregation maintain that both races are to be treated equally. The ultimate aim is to prevent the Negroes of means from figuring conspicuously in aristot-

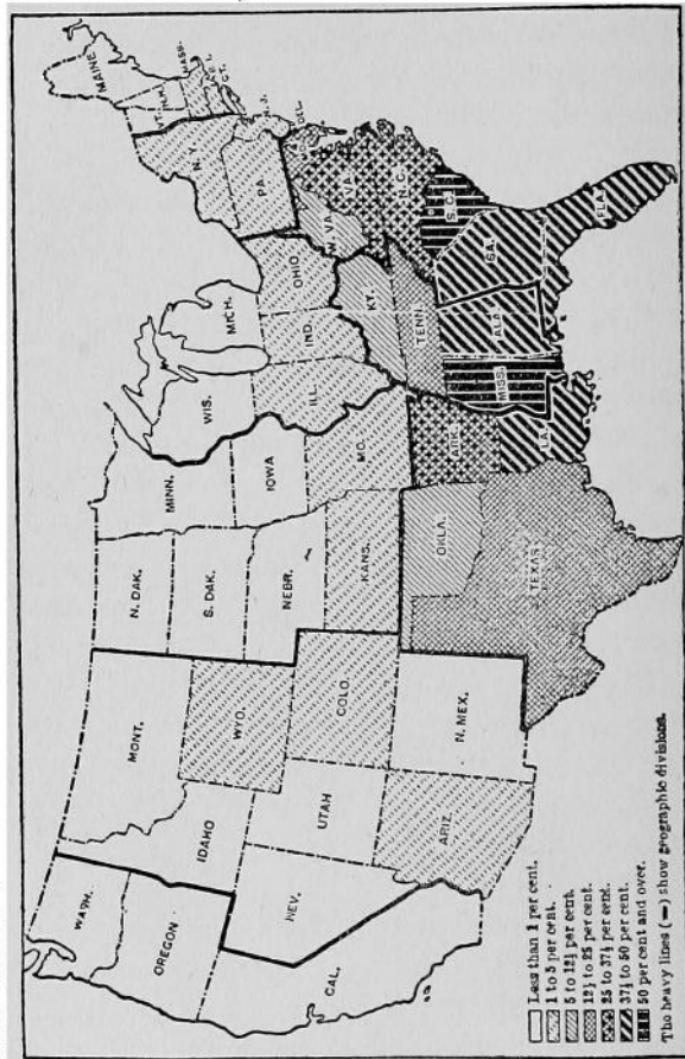
¹⁷ This is the boast of southern men of this type when speaking to their constituents or in Congress.

eratic districts where they may be brought into rather close contact with the whites. Negroes see in segregation a settled policy to keep them down, no matter what they do to elevate themselves. The southern white man, eternally dreading the miscegenation of the races, makes the life, liberty and happiness of individuals second to measures considered necessary to prevent this so-called evil that this enviable civilization, distinctly American, may not be destroyed. The United States Supreme Court in the decision of the Louisville segregation case recently declared these segregation measures unconstitutional.¹⁸

These restrictions have made the progress of the Negroes more of a problem in that directed toward social distinction, the Negroes have been denied the helpful contact of the sympathetic whites. The increasing race prejudice forces the whites to restrict their open dealing with the blacks to matters of service and business, maintaining even then the bearing of one in a sphere which the Negroes must not penetrate. The whites, therefore, never seeing the blacks as they are, and the blacks never being able to learn what the whites know, are thrown back on their own initiative, which their life as slaves could not have permitted to develop. It makes little difference that the Negroes have been free a few decades. Such freedom has in some parts

¹⁸ *Report*, October Term, 1917.

MAP SHOWING THE PER CENT OF NEGROES IN TOTAL POPULATION, BY STATES: 1910.



(Map 2, Bulletin 129, The United States Bureau of the Census.)

been tantamount to slavery, and so far as contact with the superior class is concerned, no better than that condition; for under the old regime certain slaves did learn much by close association with their masters.¹⁹

For these reasons there has been since the exodus to the West a steady migration of Negroes from the South to points in the North. But this migration, mainly due to political changes, has never assumed such large proportions as in the case of the more significant movements due to economic causes, for, as the accompanying map shows, most Negroes are still in the South. When we consider the various classes migrating, however, it will be apparent that to understand the exodus of the Negroes to the North, this longer drawn out and smaller movement must be carefully studied in all its ramifications. It should be noted that unlike some of the other migrations it has not been directed to any particular State. It has been from almost all Southern States to various parts of the North and especially to the largest cities.²⁰

What classes then have migrated? In the first place, the Negro politicians, who, after the restoration of Bourbon rule in the South, found themselves thrown out of office and often humili-

¹⁹ This danger has been often referred to when the Negroes were first emancipated.—See *Spectator*, LXVI, p. 113.

²⁰ Compare the Negro population of Northern States as given in the census of 1800 with the same in 1900.

iated and impoverished, had to find some way out of the difficulty. Some few have been relieved by sympathetic leaders of the Republican party, who secured for them federal appointments in Washington. These appointments when sometimes paying lucrative salaries have been given as a reward to those Negroes who, although dethroned in the South, remain in touch with the remnant of the Republican party there and control the delegates to the national conventions nominating candidates for President. Many Negroes of this class have settled in Washington.²¹ In some cases, the observer witnesses the pitiable scene of a man once a prominent public functionary in the South now serving in Washington as a messenger or a clerk.

The well-established blacks, however, have not been so easily induced to go. The Negroes in business in the South have usually been loath to leave their people among whom they can acquire property, whereas, if they go to the North, they have merely political freedom with no assurance of an opportunity in the economic world. But not a few of these have given themselves up to unrelenting toil with a view to accumulating sufficient wealth to move North and live thereafter on the income from their investments. Many of this class now spend some of their time in the North to educate their children.

²¹ Hart, *Southern South*, pp. 171, 172.

But they do not like to have these children who have been under refining influences return to the South to suffer the humiliation which during the last generation has been growing more and more aggravating. Endeavoring to carry out their policy of keeping the Negro down, southerners too often carefully plan to humiliate the progressive and intelligent blacks and in some cases form mobs to drive them out, as they are bad examples for that class of Negroes whom they desire to keep as menials.²²

There are also the migrating educated Negroes. They have studied history, law and economics and well understand what it is to get the rights guaranteed them by the constitution. The more they know the more discontented they become. They cannot speak out for what they want. No one is likely to second such a protest, not even the Negroes themselves, so generally have they been intimidated. The more outspoken they become, moreover, the more necessary is it for them to leave, for they thereby destroy their chances to earn a livelihood. White men in control of the public schools of the South see to it that the subserviency of the Negro teachers employed be certified beforehand. They dare not complain too much about equipment and salaries even if the per capita appro-

²² This is based on the experience of the writer and others whom he has interviewed.

priation for the education of the Negroes be one fourth of that for the whites.²⁸

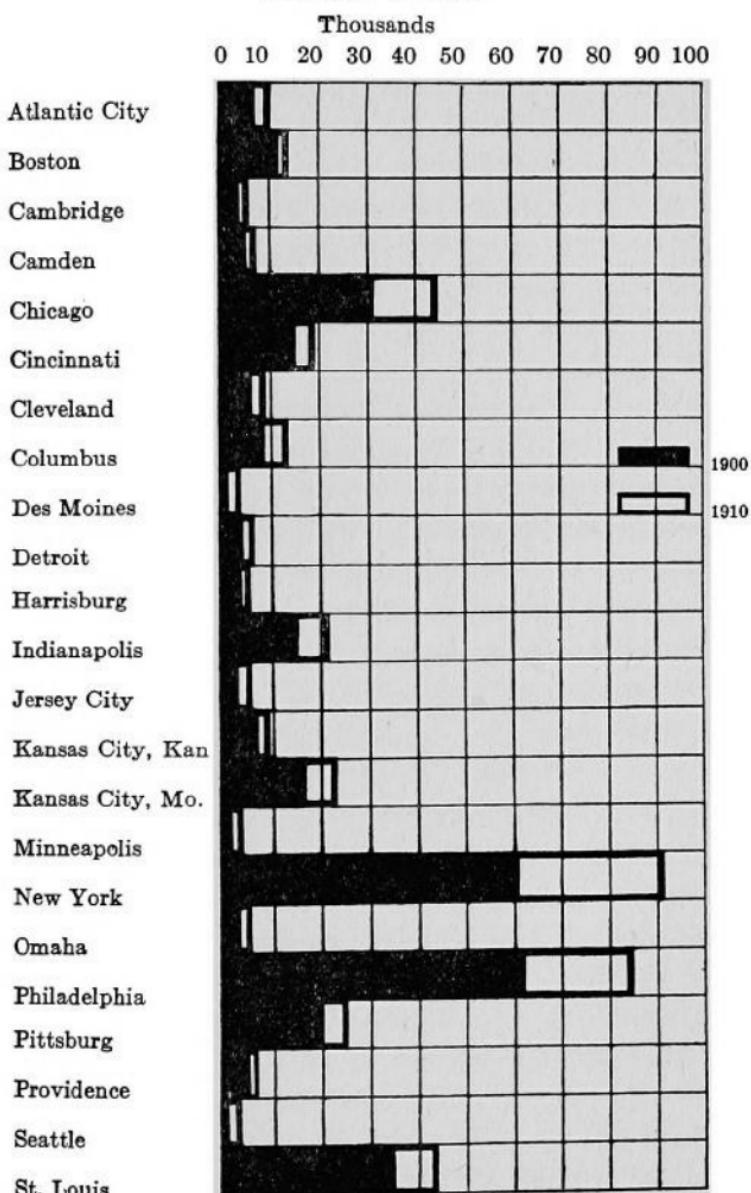
In the higher institutions of learning, especially the State schools, it is exceptional to find a principal who has the confidence of the Negroes. The Negroes will openly assert that he is in the pay of the reactionary whites, whose purpose is to keep the Negro down; and the incumbent himself will tell his board of regents how much he is opposed by the Negroes because he labors for the interests of the white race. Out of such sycophancy it is easily explained why our State schools have been so ineffective as to necessitate the sending of the Negro youth to private institutions maintained by northern philanthropy. Yet if an outspoken Negro happens to be an instructor in a private school conducted by educators from the North, he has to be careful about contending for a square deal; for, if the head of his institution does not suggest to him to proceed conservatively, the mob will dispose of the complainant.²⁹ Physicians, lawyers and preachers who are not so economically dependent as teachers can exercise no more freedom of speech in the midst of this triumphant rule of the lawless.

A large number of educated Negroes, therefore, have on account of these conditions been

²⁸ In his report on Negro education Dr. Thomas Jesse Jones has shown this to be an actual fact.

²⁹ Negroes applying for positions in the South have the situation set before them so as to know what to expect.

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE NEGRO POPULATION OF NORTHERN AND
WESTERN CITIES IN 1900 AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT
INCREASED BY 1910.



compelled to leave the South. Finding in the North, however, practically nothing in their line to do, because of the proscription by race prejudice and trades unions, many of them lead the life of menials, serving as waiters, porters, butlers and chauffeurs. While in Chicago, not long ago, the writer was in the office of a graduate of a colored southern college, who was showing his former teacher the picture of his class. In accounting for his classmates in the various walks of life, he reported that more than one third of them were settled to the occupation of Pullman porters.

The largest number of Negroes who have gone North during this period, however, belong to the intelligent laboring class. Some of them have become discontented for the very same reasons that the higher classes have tired of oppression in the South, but the larger number of them have gone North to improve their economic condition. Most of these have migrated to the large cities in the East and Northwest, such as Philadelphia, New York, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Columbus, Detroit and Chicago. To understand this problem in its urban aspects the accompanying diagram showing the increase in the Negro population of northern cities during the first decade of this century will be helpful.

Some of these Negroes have migrated after careful consideration; others have just hap-

pened to go north as wanderers; and a still larger number on the many excursions to the cities conducted by railroads during the summer months. Sometimes one excursion brings to Chicago two or three thousand Negroes, two thirds of whom never go back. They do not often follow the higher pursuits of labor in the North but they earn more money than they have been accustomed to earn in the South. They are attracted also by the liberal attitude of some whites, which, although not that of social equality, gives the Negroes a liberty in northern centers which leads them to think that they are citizens of the country.²⁴

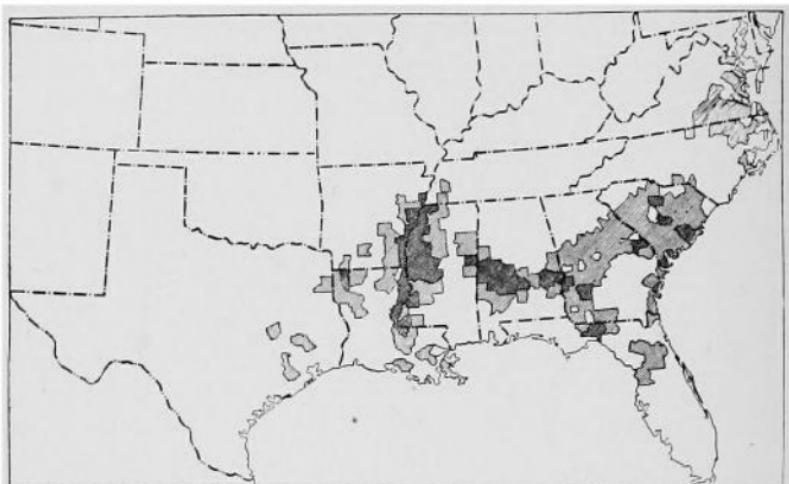
This shifting in the population has had an unusually significant effect on the black belt. Frederick Douglass advised the Negroes in 1879 to remain in the South where they would be in sufficiently large numbers to have political power,²⁵ but they have gradually scattered from the black belt so as to diminish greatly their chances ever to become the political force they formerly were in this country. The Negroes once had this possibility in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana and, had the process of Africanization prior to the Civil War had a few decades longer to do its work, there would not have been any doubt as to the ultimate preponderance of the

²⁴ The *American Journal of Political Economy*, XXV, p. 1040.

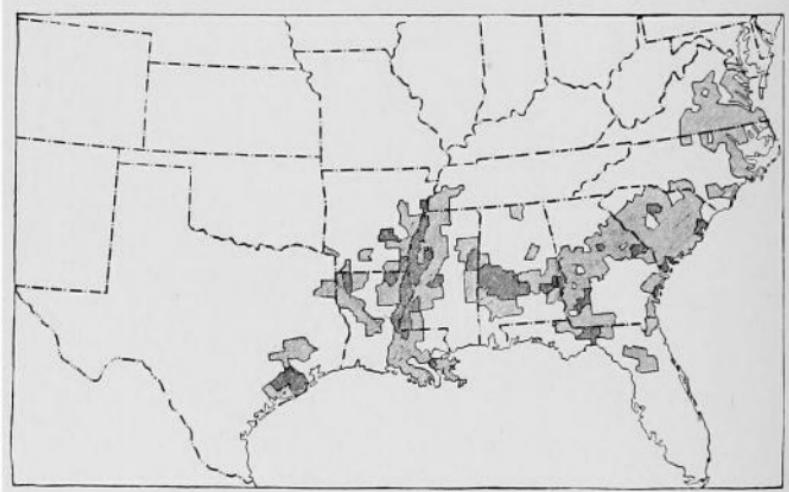
²⁵ The *Journal of Social Science*, XI, p. 16.

COUNTIES IN THE SOUTHERN STATES HAVING AT

1910



1880

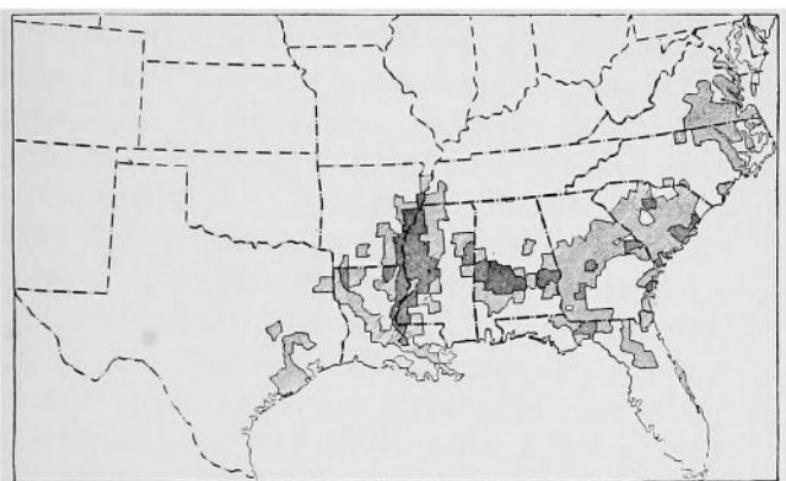


■ 50 TO 75 PER CENT ■ 75 PER CENT AND OVER

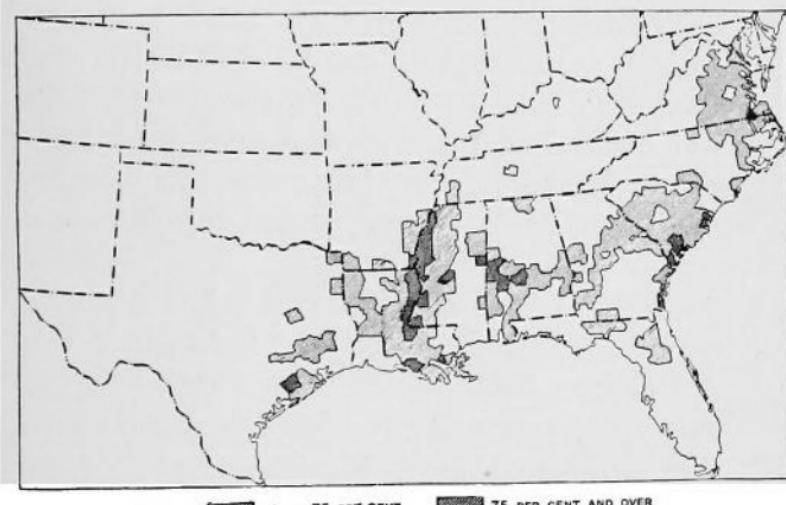
(Maps 3 and 4, Bulletin 129, U. S. Bureau of the Census.)

LEAST 50 PER CENT OF THEIR POPULATION NEGRO.

1900



1860



(Maps 5 and 6, Bulletin 129, U. S. Bureau of the Census.)

Negroes in those commonwealths. The tendencies of the black population according to the censuses of the United States and especially that of 1910, however, show that the chances for the control of these State governments by Negroes no longer exist except in South Carolina and Mississippi.²⁶ It has been predicted, therefore, that, if the same tendencies continue for the next fifty years, there will be even few counties in which the Negroes will be in a majority. All of the Southern States except Arkansas showed a proportionate increase of the white population over that of the black between 1900 and 1910, while West Virginia and Oklahoma with relatively small numbers of blacks showed, for reasons stated elsewhere, an increase in the Negro population. Thus we see coming to pass something like the proposed plan of Jefferson and other statesmen who a hundred years ago advocated the expansion of slavery to lessen the evil of the institution by distributing its burdens.²⁷

The migration of intelligent blacks, however, has been attended with several handicaps to the race. The large part of the black population is in the South and there it will stay for decades to come. The southern Negroes, therefore, have been robbed of their due part of the talented tenth. The educated blacks have had no con-

²⁶ *American Economic Review*, IV, pp. 281-292.

²⁷ Ford edition of *Jefferson's Writings*, X, p. 231.

stituency in the North and, consequently, have been unable to realize their sweetest dreams of the land of the free. In their new home the enlightened Negro must live with his light under a bushel. Those left behind in the South soon despair of seeing a brighter day and yield to the yoke. In the places of the leaders who were wont to speak for their people, the whites have raised up Negroes who accept favors offered them on the condition that their lips be sealed up forever on the rights of the Negro.

This emigration too has left the Negro subject to other evils. There are many first-class Negro business men in the South, but although there were once progressive men of color, who endeavored to protect the blacks from being plundered by white sharks and harpies there have arisen numerous unscrupulous Negroes who have for a part of the proceeds from such jobbery associated themselves with ill-designing white men to dupe illiterate Negroes. This trickery is brought into play in marketing their crops, selling them supplies, or purchasing their property. To carry out this iniquitous plan the persons concerned have the protection of the law, for while Negroes in general are imposed upon, those engaged in robbing them have no cause to fear.

CHAPTER IX

THE EXODUS DURING THE WORLD WAR

WITHIN the last two years there has been a steady stream of Negroes into the North in such large numbers as to overshadow in its results all other movements of the kind in the United States. These Negroes have come largely from Alabama, Tennessee, Florida, Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, Arkansas and Mississippi. The given causes of this migration are numerous and complicated. Some untruths centering around this exodus have not been unlike those of other migrations. Again we hear that the Negroes are being brought North to fight organized labor,¹ and to carry doubtful States for the Republicans.² These numerous explanations themselves, however, give rise to doubt as to the fundamental cause.

Why then should the Negroes leave the South? It has often been spoken of as the best place for them. There, it is said, they have made unusual strides forward. The progress of the Negroes in the South, however, has in no sense been general, although the land owned by Negroes in the

¹ *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 9, 28, 1916.

² *Ibid.*, Oct. 18, 28; Nov. 5, 7, 12, 15; Dec. 4, 9, 1916.

country and the property of thrifty persons of their race in urban communities may be extensive. In most parts of the South the Negroes are still unable to become landowners or successful business men. Conditions and customs have reserved these spheres for the whites. Generally speaking, the Negroes are still dependent on the white people for food and shelter. Although not exactly slaves, they are yet attached to the white people as tenants, servants or dependents. Accepting this as their lot, they have been content to wear their lord's cast-off clothing, and live in his ramshackled barn or cellar. In this unhappy state so many have settled down, losing all ambition to attain a higher station. The world has gone on but in their sequestered sphere progress has passed them by.

What then is the cause? There have been *bulldozing*, terrorism, maltreatment and what not of persecution; but the Negroes have not in large numbers wandered away from the land of their birth. What the migrants themselves think about it, goes to the very heart of the trouble. / Some say that they left the South on account of injustice in the courts, unrest, lack of privileges, denial of the right to vote, bad treatment, oppression, segregation or lynching. Others say that they left to find employment, to secure better wages, better school facilities, and

⁸ *The New Orleans Times Picayune*, March 26, 1914.

better opportunities to toil upward.⁹ Southern white newspapers unaccustomed to give the Negroes any mention but that of criminals have said that the Negroes are going North because they have not had a fair chance in the South and that if they are to be retained there, the attitude of the whites toward them must be changed. Professor William O. Scroggs, of Louisiana State University, considers as causes of this exodus "the relatively low wages paid farm labor, an unsatisfactory tenant or crop-sharing system, the boll weevil, the crop failure of 1916, lynching, disfranchisement, segregation, poor schools, and the monotony, isolation and drudgery of farm life." Professor Scroggs, however, is wrong in thinking that the persecution of the blacks has little to do with the migration for the reason that during these years when the treatment of the Negroes is decidedly better they are leaving the South. This does not mean that they would not have left before, if they had had economic opportunities in the North. It is highly probable that the Negroes would not be leaving the South today, if they were treated as men, although there might be numerous opportunities for economic improvement in the North.¹⁰

The immediate cause of this movement was the suffering due to the floods aggravated by

⁹ *The Crisis*, July, 1917.

¹⁰ *American Journal of Political Economy*, XXX, p. 1040.

the depredations of the boll weevil. Although generally mindful of our welfare, the United States Government has not been as ready to build levees against a natural enemy to property as it has been to provide fortifications for warfare. It has been necessary for local communities and State governments to tax themselves to maintain them. The national government, however, has appropriated to the purpose of facilitating inland navigation certain sums which have been used in doing this work, especially in the Mississippi Valley. There are now 1,538 miles of levees on both sides of the Mississippi from Cape Girardeau to the passes. These levees, of course, are still inadequate to the security of the planters against these inundations. Carrying 406 million tons of mud a year, the river becomes a dangerous stream subject to change, abandoning its old bed to cut for itself a new channel, transferring property from one State to another, isolating cities and leaving once useful levees marooned in the landscape like old Indian mounds or overgrown intrenchments.³

This valley has, therefore, been frequently visited with disasters which have often set the population in motion. The first disastrous floods came in 1858 and 1859, breaking many of the levees, the destruction of which was practically completed by the floods of 1865 and 1869. There is an annual rise in the stream, but since

³ *The World's Work*, XX, p. 271.

1874 this river system has fourteen times devastated large areas of this section with destructive floods. The property in this district depreciated in value to the extent of about 400 millions in ten years. Farmers from this section, therefore, have at times moved west with foreigners to take up public lands.

The other disturbing factor in this situation was the boll weevil, an interloper from Mexico in 1892. The boll weevil is an insect about one fourth of an inch in length, varying from one eighth to one third of an inch with a breadth of about one third of the length. When it first emerges it is yellowish, then becomes grayish brown and finally assumes a black shade. It breeds on no other plant than cotton and feeds on the boll. This little animal, at first attacked the cotton crop in Texas. It was not thought that it would extend its work into the heart of the South so as to become of national consequence, but it has, at the rate of forty to one hundred sixty miles annually, invaded all of the cotton district except that of the Carolinas and Virginia. The damage it does, varies according to the rainfall and the harshness of the winter, increasing with the former and decreasing with the latter. At times the damage has been to the extent of a loss of 50 per cent. of the crop, estimated at 400,000 bales of cotton annually, about 4,500,000 bales since the invasion or \$250,000,000 worth of cotton.⁴ The out-

* *The World's Work*, XX, p. 272.

put of the South being thus cut off, the planter has less income to provide supplies for his black tenants and, the prospects for future production being dark, merchants accustomed to give them credit have to refuse. This, of course, means financial depression, for the South is a borrowing section and any limitation to credit there blocks the wheels of industry. It was fortunate for the Negro laborers in this district that there was then a demand for labor in the North when this condition began to obtain.

This demand was made possible by the cutting off of European immigration by the World War, which thereby rendered this hitherto uncongenial section an inviting field for the Negro. The Negroes have made some progress in the North during the last fifty years, but despite their achievements they have been so handicapped by race prejudice and proscribed by trades unions that the uplift of the race by economic methods has been impossible. The European immigrants have hitherto excluded the Negroes even from the menial positions. In the midst of the drudgery left for them, the blacks have often heretofore been debased to the status of dependents and paupers. Scattered through the North too in such small numbers, they have been unable to unite for social betterment and mutual improvement and naturally too weak to force the community to respect their wishes as could be done by a large group with some

political or economic power. At present, however, Negro laborers, who once went from city to city, seeking such employment as trades unions left to them, can work even as skilled laborers throughout the North.⁵ Women of color formerly excluded from domestic service by foreign maids are now in demand. Many mills and factories which Negroes were prohibited from entering a few years ago are now bidding for their labor. Railroads cannot find help to keep their property in repair, contractors fall short of their plans for failure to hold mechanics drawn into the industrial boom and the United States Government has had to advertise for men to hasten the preparation for war.

Men from afar went south to tell the Negroes of a way of escape to a more congenial place. Blacks long since unaccustomed to venture a few miles from home, at once had visions of a promised land just a few hundred miles away. Some were told of the chance to amass fabulous riches, some of the opportunities for education and some of the hospitality of the places of amusement and recreation in the North. The migrants then were soon on the way. Railway stations became conspicuous with the presence of Negro tourists, the trains were crowded to full capacity and the streets of northern cities

⁵ *New York Times*, March 29, April 7, 9, May 30 and 31, 1917.

were soon congested with black laborers seeking to realize their dreams in the land of unusual opportunity.

Employment agencies, recently multiplied to meet the demand for labor, find themselves unable to cope with the situation and agents sent into the South to induce the blacks by offers of free transportation and high wages to go north, have found it impossible to supply the demand in centers where once toiled the Poles, Italians and the Greeks formerly preferred to the Negroes.⁶ In other words, the present migration differs from others in that the Negro has opportunity awaiting him in the North whereas formerly it was necessary for him to make a place for himself upon arriving among enemies. The proportion of those returning to the South, therefore, will be inconsiderable.

Becoming alarmed at the immensity of this movement the South has undertaken to check it. To frighten Negroes from the North southern newspapers are carefully circulating reports that many of them are returning to their native land because of unexpected hardships.⁷ But having failed in this, southerners have compelled employment agents to cease operations there, arrested suspected employers and, to pre-

⁶ *Survey*, XXXVII, pp. 569-571 and XXXVIII, pp. 27, 226, 331, 428; *Forum*, LVII, p. 181; *The World's Work*, XXXIV, pp. 135, 314-319; *Outlook*, CXVI, pp. 520-521; *Independent*, XCI, pp. 53-54.

⁷ *The Crisis*, 1917.

vent the departure of the Negroes, imprisoned on false charges those who appear at stations to leave for the North. This procedure could not long be effective, for by the more legal and clandestine methods of railway passenger agents the work has gone forward. Some southern communities have, therefore, advocated drastic legislation against labor agents, as was suggested in Louisiana in 1914, when by operation of the Underwood Tariff Law the Negroes thrown out of employment in the sugar district migrated to the cotton plantations.⁸

One should not, however, get the impression that the majority of the Negroes are leaving the South. Eager as these Negroes seem to go, there is no unanimity of opinion as to whether migration is the best policy. The sycophant, toady class of Negroes naturally advise the blacks to remain in the South to serve their white neighbors. The radical protagonists of the equal-rights-for-all element urge them to come North by all means. Then there are the thinking Negroes, who are still further divided. Both divisions of this element have the interests of the race at heart, but they are unable to agree as to exactly what the blacks should now do. Thinking that the present war will soon be over and that consequently the immigration of foreigners into this country will again set in and force out of employment thousands of Negroes who have migrated to the North, some of the

most representative Negroes are advising their fellows to remain where they are. The most serious objection to this transplantation is that it means for the Negroes a loss of land, the rapid acquisition of which has long been pointed to as the best evidence of the ability of the blacks to rise in the economic world. So many Negroes who have by dint of energy purchased small farms yielding an increasing income from year to year, are now disposing of them at nominal prices to come north to work for wages. Looking beyond the war, however, and thinking too that the depopulation of Europe during this upheaval will render immigration from that quarter for some years an impossibility, other thinkers urge the Negroes to continue the migration to the North, where the race may be found in sufficiently large numbers to wield economic and political power.

Great as is the dearth of labor in the South, moreover, the Negro exodus has not as yet caused such a depression as to unite the whites in inducing the blacks to remain in that section. In the first place, the South has not yet felt the worst effects of this economic upheaval as that part of the country has been unusually aided by the millions which the United States Government is daily spending there. Furthermore, the poor whites are anxious to see the exodus of their competitors in the field of labor. This leaves the capitalists at their mercy, and in

keeping with their domineering attitude, they will be able to handle the labor situation as they desire. As an evidence of this fact we need but note the continuation of mob rule and lynching in the South despite the preachings against it of the organs of thought which heretofore winked at it. This terrorism has gone to an unexpected extent. Negro farmers have been threatened with bodily injury, unless they leave certain parts.

The southerner of aristocratic bearing will say that only the shiftless poor whites terrorize the Negroes. This may be so, but the truth offers little consolation when we observe that most white people in the South are of this class; and the tendency of this element to put their children to work before they secure much education does not indicate that the South will soon experience that general enlightenment necessary to exterminate these survivals of barbarism. Unless the upper classes of the whites can bring the mob around to their way of thinking that the persecution of the Negro is prejudicial to the interests of all, it is not likely that mob rule will soon cease and the migration to this extent will be promoted rather than retarded.

It is unfortunate for the South that the growing consciousness of the Negroes has culminated at the very time they are most needed. Finally heeding the advice of agricultural experts to re-

construct its agricultural system, the South has learned in the school of bitter experience to depart from the plan of producing the single cotton crop. It is now raising food-stuffs to make that section self-supporting without reducing the usual output of cotton. With the increasing production in the South, therefore, more labor is needed just at the very time it is being drawn to centers in the North. The North being an industrial and commercial section has usually attracted the immigrants, who will never fit into the economic situation in the South because they will not accept the treatment given Negroes. The South, therefore, is now losing the only labor which it can ever use under present conditions.

Where these Negroes are going is still more interesting. The exodus to the west was mainly directed to Kansas and neighboring States, the migration to the Southwest centered in Oklahoma and Texas, pioneering Negro laborers drifted into the industrial district of the Appalachian highland during the eighties and nineties and the infiltration of the discontented talented tenth affected largely the cities of the North. But now we are told that at the very time the mining districts of the North and West are being filled with blacks the western planters are supplying their farms with them and that into some cities have gone sufficient skilled and unskilled Negro workers to increase the black

population more than one hundred per cent. Places in the North, where the black population has not only not increased but even decreased in recent years, are now receiving a steady influx of Negroes. In fact, this is a nation-wide migration affecting all parts and all conditions.

Students of social problems are now wondering whether the Negro can be adjusted in the North. Many perplexing problems must arise. This movement will produce results not unlike those already mentioned in the discussion of other migrations, some of which we have evidence of today. There will be an increase in race prejudice leading in some communities to actual outbreaks as in Chester and Youngstown and probably to massacres like that of East St. Louis, in which participated not only well-known citizens but the local officers and the State militia. The Negroes in the North are in competition with white men who consider them not only strike breakers but a sort of inferior individuals unworthy of the consideration which white men deserve. And this condition obtains even where Negroes have been admitted to the trades unions.

Negroes in seeking new homes in the North, moreover, invade residential districts hitherto exclusively white. There they encounter prejudice and persecution until most whites thus disturbed move out determined to do whatever they can to prevent their race from suffering

from further depreciation of property and the disturbance of their community life. Lawlessness has followed, showing that violence may under certain conditions develop among some classes anywhere rather than reserve itself for vigilance committees of primitive communities. It has brought out too another aspect of lawlessness in that it breaks out in the North where the numbers of Negroes are still too small to serve as an excuse for the terrorism and lynching considered necessary in the South to keep the Negroes down.

The maltreatment of the Negroes will be nationalized by this exodus. The poor whites of both sections will strike at this race long stigmatized by servitude but now demanding economic equality. Race prejudice, the fatal weakness of the Americans, will not so soon abate although there will be advocates of fraternity, equality and liberty required to reconstruct our government and rebuild our civilization in conformity with the demands of modern efficiency by placing every man regardless of his color wherever he may do the greatest good for the greatest number.

The Negroes, however, are doubtless going to the North in sufficiently large numbers to make themselves felt. If this migration falls short of establishing in that section Negro colonies large enough to wield economic and political power, their state in the end will not be any better than

that of the Negroes already there. It is to these large numbers alone that we must look for an agent to counteract the development of race feeling into riots. In large numbers the blacks will be able to strike for better wages or concessions due a rising laboring class and they will have enough votes to defeat for reelection those officers who wink at mob violence or treat Negroes as persons beyond the pale of the law.

The Negroes in the North, however, will get little out of the harvest if, like the blacks of Reconstruction days, they unwisely concentrate their efforts on solving all of their problems by electing men of their race as local officers or by sending a few members even to Congress as is likely in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago within the next generation. The Negroes have had representatives in Congress before but they were put out because their constituency was uneconomic and politically impossible. There was nothing but the mere letter of the law behind the Reconstruction Negro officeholder and the thus forced political recognition against public opinion could not last any longer than natural forces for some time thrown out of gear by unnatural causes could resume the usual line of procedure.

It would be of no advantage to the Negro race today to send to Congress forty Negro Representatives on the pro rata basis of numbers, especially if they happened not to be exception-

ally well qualified. They would remain in Congress only so long as the American white people could devise some plan for eliminating them as they did during the Reconstruction period. Near as the world has approached real democracy, history gives no record of a permanent government conducted on this basis. Interests have always been stronger than numbers. The Negroes in the North, therefore, should not on the eve of the economic revolution follow the advice of their misguided and misleading race leaders who are diverting their attention from their actual welfare to a specialization in politics. To concentrate their efforts on electing a few Negroes to office wherever the blacks are found in the majority, would exhibit the narrowness of their oppressors. It would be as unwise as the policy of the Republican party of setting aside a few insignificant positions like that of Recorder of Deeds, Register of the Treasury and Auditor of the Navy as segregated jobs for Negroes. Such positions have furnished a nucleus for the large, worthless, office-seeking class of Negroes in Washington, who have established the going of the people of the city toward pretence and sham.

The Negroes should support representative men of any color or party, if they stand for a square deal and equal rights for all. The new Negroes in the North, therefore, will, as so many of their race in New York, Philadelphia

and Chicago are now doing, ally themselves with those men who are fairminded and considerate of the man far down, and seek to embrace their many opportunities for economic progress, a foundation for political recognition, upon which the race must learn to build. Every race in the universe must aspire to becoming a factor in politics; but history shows that there is no short route to such success. Like other despised races beset with the prejudice and militant opposition of self-styled superiors, the Negroes must increase their industrial efficiency, improve their opportunities to make a living, develop the home, church and school, and contribute to art, literature, science and philosophy to clear the way to that political freedom of which they cannot be deprived.

The entire country will be benefited by this upheaval. It will be helpful even to the South. The decrease in the black population in those communities where the Negroes outnumber the whites will remove the fear of *Negro domination*, one of the causes of the backwardness of the South and its peculiar civilization. Many of the expensive precautions which the southern people have taken to keep the Negroes down, much of the terrorism incited to restrain the blacks from self-assertion will no longer be considered necessary; for, having the excess in numbers on their side, the whites will finally rest assured that the Negroes may be encouraged with-

out any apprehension that they may develop enough power to subjugate or embarrass their former masters.

The Negroes too are very much in demand in the South and the intelligent whites will gladly give them larger opportunities to attach them to that section, knowing that the blacks, once conscious of their power to move freely throughout the country wherever they may improve their condition, will never endure hardships like those formerly inflicted upon the race. The South is already learning that the Negro is the most desirable laborer for that section, that the persecution of Negroes not only drives them out but makes the employment of labor such a problem that the South will not be an attractive section for capital. It will, therefore, be considered the duty of business men to secure protection to the Negroes lest their ill-treatment force them to migrate to the extent of bringing about a stagnation of their business.

The exodus has driven home the truth that the prosperity of the South is at the mercy of the Negro. Dependent on cheap labor, which the bulldozing whites will not readily furnish, the wealthy southerners must finally reach the position of regarding themselves and the Negroes as having a community of interests which each must promote. "Nature itself in those States," Douglass said, "came to the rescue of the Negro. He had labor, the South wanted it,

and must have it or perish. Since he was free he could then give it, or withhold it; use it where he was, or take it elsewhere, as he pleased. His labor made him a slave and his labor could, if he would, make him free, comfortable and independent. It is more to him than either fire, sword, ballot boxes or bayonets. It touches the heart of the South through its pocket."¹¹ Knowing that the Negro has this silent weapon to be used against his employer or the community, the South is already giving the race better educational facilities, better railway accommodations, and will eventually, if the advocacy of certain southern newspapers be heeded, grant them political privileges. Wages in the South, therefore, have risen even in the extreme southwestern States, where there is an opportunity to import Mexican labor. Reduced to this extremity, the southern aristocrats have begun to lose some of their race prejudice, which has not hitherto yielded to reason or philanthropy!

Southern men are telling their neighbors that their section must abandon the policy of treating the Negroes as a problem and construct a program for recognition rather than for repression. Meetings are, therefore, being held to find out what the Negro wants and what may be done to keep them contented. They are told that the Negro must be elevated not exploited, that to make the South what it must needs be, the co-

¹¹ *American Journal of Social Science*, XI, p. 4.

operation of all is needed to train and equip the men of all races for efficiency. The aim of all then must be to reform or get rid of the unfair proprietors who do not give their tenants a fair division of the returns from their labor. To this end the best whites and blacks are urged to come together to find a working basis for a systematic effort in the interest of all.

To say that either the North or the South can easily become adjusted to this change is entirely too sanguine. The North will have a problem. The Negroes in the northern city will have much more to contend with than when settled in the rural districts or small urban centers. Forced by restrictions of real estate men into congested districts, there has appeared the tendency toward further segregation. They are denied social contact, are sagaciously separated from the whites in public places of amusement and are clandestinely segregated in public schools in spite of the law to the contrary. As a consequence the Negro migrant often finds himself with less friends than he formerly had. The northern man who once denounced the South on account of its maltreatment of the blacks gradually grows silent when a Negro is brought next door. There comes with the movement, therefore, the difficult problem of housing.

Where then must the migrants go. They are not wanted by the whites and are treated with contempt by the native blacks of the northern

cities, who consider their brethren from the South too criminal and too vicious to be tolerated. In the average progressive city there has heretofore been a certain increase in the number of houses through natural growth, but owing to the high cost of materials, high wages, increasing taxation and the inclination to invest money in enterprises growing out of the war, fewer houses are now being built, although Negroes are pouring into these centers as a steady stream. The usual Negro quarters in northern centers of this sort have been filled up and the overflow of the black population scattered throughout the city among white people. Old warehouses, store rooms, churches, railroad cars and tents have been used to meet these demands.

A large per cent of these Negroes are located in rooming houses or tenements for several families. The majority of them cannot find individual rooms. Many are crowded into the same room, therefore, and too many into the same bed. Sometimes as many as four and five sleep in one bed, and that may be placed in the basement, dining-room or kitchen where there is neither adequate light nor air. In some cases men who work during the night sleep by day in beds used by others during the night. Some of their houses have no water inside and have toilets on the outside without sewerage connections. The cooking is often done by coal or wood stoves or kerosene lamps. Yet the rent runs

high although the houses are generally out of repair and in some cases have been condemned by the municipality. The unsanitary conditions in which many of the blacks are compelled to live are in violation of municipal ordinances.

Furthermore, because of the indiscriminate employment by labor agents and the dearth of labor requiring the acceptance of almost all sorts of men, some disorderly and worthless Negroes have been brought into the North. On the whole, however, these migrants are not lazy, shiftless and desperate as some predicted that they would be. They generally attend church, save their money and send a part of their savings regularly to their families. They do not belong to the class going North in quest of whiskey. Mr. Abraham Epstein, who has written a valuable pamphlet setting forth his researches in Pittsburgh, states that the migrants of that city do not generally imbibe and most of those who do, take beer only.¹² Out of four hundred and seventy persons to whom he propounded this question, two hundred and ten or forty-four per cent of them were total abstainers. Seventy per cent of those having families do not drink at all.

With this congestion, however, have come serious difficulties. Crowded conditions give rise to vice, crime and disease. The prevalence of vice has not been the rule but tendencies,

¹² Epstein, *The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh*.

which better conditions in the South restrained from developing, have under these undesirable conditions been given an opportunity to grow. There is, therefore, a tendency toward the crowding of dives, assembling on the corners of streets and the commission of petty offences which crowd them into the police courts. One finds also sometimes a congestion in houses of dissipation and the carrying of concealed weapons. Law abiding on the whole, however, they have not experienced a wave of crime. The chief offences are those resulting from the saloons and denizens of vice, which are furnished by the community itself.

Disease has been one of their worst enemies, but reports on their health have been exaggerated. On account of this sudden change of the Negroes from one climate to another and the hardships of more unrelenting toil, many of them have been unable to resist pneumonia, bronchitis and tuberculosis. Churches, rescue missions and the National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes have offered relief in some of these cases. The last-named organization is serving in large cities as a sort of clearing house for such activities and as means of interpreting one race to the other. It has now eighteen branches in cities to which this migration has been directed. Through a local worker these migrants are approached, properly placed and supervised until they can adjust

themselves to the community without apparent embarrassment to either race. The League has been able to handle the migrants arriving by extending the work so as to know their movements beforehand.

The occupations in which these people engage will throw further light on their situation. About ninety per cent of them do unskilled labor. Only ten per cent of them do semi-skilled or skilled labor. They serve as common laborers, puddlers, mold-setters, painters, carpenters, bricklayers, cement workers and machinists. What the Negroes need then is that sort of freedom which carries with it industrial opportunity and social justice. This they cannot attain until they be permitted to enter the higher pursuits of labor. Two reasons are given for failure to enter these: first, that Negro labor is unstable and inefficient; and second, that white men will protest. Organized labor, however, has done nothing to help the blacks. Yet it is a fact that accustomed to the easy-going toil of the plantation, the blacks have not shown the same efficiency as that of the whites. Some employers report, however, that they are glad to have them because they are more individualistic and do not like to group. But it is not true that colored labor cannot be organized. The blacks have merely been neglected by organized labor. Wherever they have had the opportunity to do so, they have

organized and stood for their rights like men. The trouble is that the trades unions are generally antagonistic to Negroes although they are now accepting the blacks in self-defense. The policy of excluding Negroes from these bodies is made effective by an evasive procedure, despite the fact that the constitutions of many of them specifically provide that there shall be no discrimination on account of race or color.

Because of this tendency some of the representatives of trades unions have asked why Negroes do not organize unions of their own. This the Negroes have generally failed to do, thinking that they would not be recognized by the American Federation of Labor, and knowing too that what their union would have to contend with in the economic world would be diametrically opposed to the wishes of the men from whom they would have to seek recognition. Organized labor, moreover, is opposed to the powerful capitalists, the only real friends the Negroes have in the North to furnish them food and shelter while their lives are often being sought by union members. Steps toward organizing Negro labor have been made in various Northern cities during 1917 and 1918.¹³ The objective of this movement for the present, however, is largely that of employment.

Eventually the Negro migrants will, no doubt,

¹³ Epstein, *The Negro Migrant in Pittsburgh*.

without much difficulty establish themselves among law-abiding and industrious people of the North where they will receive assistance. Many persons now see in this shifting of the Negro population the dawn of a new day, not in making the Negro numerically dominant anywhere to obtain political power, but to secure for him freedom of movement from section to section as a competitor in the industrial world. They also observe that while there may be an increase of race prejudice in the North the same will in that proportion decrease in the South, thus balancing the equation while giving the Negro his best chance in the economic world out of which he must emerge a real man with power to secure his rights as an American citizen.