

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Publications

Civil Rights Archive

1-1-1900

The Free Negro in the Ante Bellum South

Alfred Holt Stone

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/civ_pubs

 Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Stone, Alfred Holt, "The Free Negro in the Ante Bellum South" (1900). *Publications*. 62.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/civ_pubs/62

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Civil Rights Archive at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

The Free Negro in the Ante Bellum South.

In 1474, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain addressed a letter to one Juan de Valladolid, commonly called the "Negro Count", and named him "mayoral of the Negroes" of the "very loyal and noble city of Seville". "For the many good, loyal and signal services which you have done us," ran the royal commission, "and do each day, and because we know your sufficiency, ability and good disposition, we constitute you mayoral and judge of all the negroes and mulattoes, free or slaves, which are in the very loyal and noble city of Seville, and throughout the whole archbishopric thereof, and that the said negroes and mulattoes may not hold any festivals, nor pleadings amongst themselves, except before you Juan de Valladolid, negro, our judge and mayoral of the said negroes and mulattoes; and we command that you, and you only, should take cognizance of the disputes, pleadings, marriages, and other things which may take place amongst them, forasmuch as you are a person sufficient for that office, and deserving of your power, and you know the laws and ordinances which ought to be kept, and we are informed that you are of noble lineage amongst the said negroes." (Helps, vol.1, p. 21.)

The fact of the issuance of such a commission, and the terms in which it is couched, open up a field of reflection upon the status of the Negroes of Spain before the date of the discovery which was to change the life current of their race. Bond and free, blacks and mulattoes, they had their festivals and holidays;

their disputes and pleadings; their marriages and funerals; their customs and laws; and among them, evidently, were some reputed to be of noble lineage.

But we cannot pursue these reflections here. I go back to Spain again only to suggest that in the life of the free Negro no less than in that of the slave, the historian has a broader and older and more interesting field than is commonly supposed.

Throughout the history of slavery we are confronted with just such instances as that in Seville,- the illustration of the impossibility of placing all the people of one race upon the same dead level of mediocrity, howsoever low the average status of the race may be. These instances serve also to suggest what was a universal concomitant of slavery,- the recognition on the part of the master class of the individual superiority of certain members of the other class. As far back as we may go in the history of Negro slavery, we find also that Negroes were free. The history of these free members of the race has not received the attention which it deserves, and which undoubtedly will some day be accorded it.

In fixing 1619 and the Virginia coast as the date and place of entry of the Negro into the colonies, we may be correct, though it has been claimed that Negroes were brought to the same spot many years before. But we lose sight of the fact that small numbers of Negroes accompanied the first Spanish explorers in all their inland expeditions to what is now our southwestern territory. Among the first foreigners, if not the first, to enter what is now New Mexico, was a Negro with Cabeza de Vaca and Narvaez, in the expedition which left Spain in 1527. Again, a Negro with Hernando de Alasco visited the same region in 1540. Balboa was accompanie^d

by Negroes in 1513. In 1559 the council of Santiago de Chile granted to a free Negro a plot of ground in that town. (Negro Companions of Spanish Explorers, R. R. Wright, American Anthropologist, new series, vol.4, 1902, p. 217. See also Helps, vol.4, p.267)

My own belief is that many of the Negroes attached to these expeditions were either free or nominally so. They were the first of their kind in this country, but not in the new world. Orderly procedure would require us first to notice the free Negroes in the West Indies, but this we have not time to do. I can only say that they were there. One of the old Spanish laws for regulating slaves and free Negroes in the colonies, provided that "free Negresses, unless married to Spaniards, should not wear gold ornaments, pearls or silk." (Helps, vol.4, p. 250.) Somewhat similar statutes existed in all large slaveholding communities, and they illustrate the white attitude toward the question of the effect of free Negroes upon the morale of the slave population. In some of the American colonies and statutes free Negroes occasionally made such a display of their finery, that we find, now and then, bitter complaints against the authorities for permitting such violations of the law. And this also suggests the commonest fact in the reality of race relations during slavery,- which was that the letter of the law was not enforced along certain lines involving personal liberties and privileges to the individual Negro. The life of the free Negro was ordered far more upon local custom and tradition than upon the written law. When, for example, we find public sentiment for local reasons forbidding the free Negro in one part of North Carolina to carry canes or ride in carriages, elsewhere in the same

state we find him owning slaves and going about in his coach-and-four. (Old Time Negro Education, G. S. Dickerman, Southern Workman, October 1903, p. 503.)

Without attempting to enter into details, it may be said that in many and various respects the Spanish laws were more liberal than the English. This was particularly true as to manumission.

The census of 1790 returned 700,000 slaves, in round numbers, and 60,000 free Negroes. The number of each class steadily increased until in 1860 we had a slave population of 3,950,000, with 488,000 Negroes who were free. Of these, 251,000 lived in the slaveholding states, and 237,000 in various other parts of the country. It is with this free class in the ^{Southern} ~~United~~ States that we are particularly interested here.

The common description of the free Negro population during the controversial period was not unlike the phrase with which we are familiar today as applied to certain gentlemen of monopolistic proclivities. They were considered "undesirables", and were so designated. In so far as the law was concerned they were placed in practically the same category as the slaves. Legally they were discriminated against in all the colonies, in one way or another. They were prohibited certain occupations, and in so far as the law could do it, it was made about as hard as possible for them to earn a livelihood. Then, with the rare generosity which usually characterizes the Anglo-Saxon in his transactions with other and darker races, we declared the free Negro to be a nuisance, on general principles, but particularly because he was not prosperous and would not work.

I know of no better excuse than this occasion to say something

of the danger of laying too much stress upon what we read in the laws governing slaves and free Negroes. I have just remarked that the letter of the law was often not enforced against free Negroes, and this was true in a very broad sense and through a wide field of regulations. A long period of controversialism is always bad for the truth of any subject. The duration and bitterness of the controversy makes this particularly so in the case of the life of the ante bellum Negro. We are apt to be wholly misled if we interpret these laws too literally or accept them too seriously. Georgia had a statute, passed primarily at the instance of white laboring men from the North, which penalized the use of Negro mechanics by white employers. But we need not imagine for a moment that a planter or other employer in Georgia was deterred thereby from having his own work done in his own way by whomsoever he pleased to employ. A similar statute in South Carolina was designed primarily to raise the wages of white artisans, but it never was observed. One of the queer turns which the free Negro's history exhibits is in an old Massachusetts case. The good people of that state became alarmed in 1821 at the anticipated increase of what they designated "an undesirable species of population", these being free Negroes. A legislative committee was appointed to devise some means of averting the threatened influx, preferably through a law prohibiting the immigration of free Negroes into the state. After considerable wrestling with the subject they discovered that there was already in existence a law which answered their purpose. This was the old statute of 1787, under which free Negroes were required to give bond for not becoming a charge upon the community, failing which they could be expelled the state. Yet I have found

only one or two indications that this law was resorted to. Illinois had one of the most drastic free Negro codes in America, and it was occasionally enforced, but we find a free Negro paying taxes on \$30,000 worth of property, and memorializing the governor and legislature in behalf of greater freedom for his people. The legislation on these subjects was all borrowed from or patterned upon that of the West Indies, without great regard for differences of economic, social, or political conditions, or the character of the white population. The South Carolina code was borrowed from Barbadoes; that of Louisiana from Santo Domingo; and they, and all the others in this country, contained provisions which were never enforced, and which served only to discredit those who suffered so much useless and offensive rubbish to cumber their books. The only excuse for many of these laws was that, like the resurrected Massachusetts statute, they would be in esse if an emergency should ever render them temporarily necessary. But, for that matter, every state in the Union has today in its codes, provisions which have no more real existence than had some of these old laws. (Illustration: Right of Husband to chastise wife, with stick no longer than his thumb.)

The political status of the free Negro we shall discuss tomorrow. Their social status varied with differences of local condition. Using the term social as descriptive of their general rights and privileges in the community, it was probably better in Louisiana than in any other state. The same thing may be said of their economic condition in that state. Olmsted found on Cane River, La., a number of large planters, free colored families, living in handsome homes, many of them educated and refined, most

of them enjoying the respect of the community. This does not mean that there was no social discrimination against them, using social in its narrower sense. Unquestionably there was. What is meant is that out of the complex conditions arising from a juxtaposition of slavery and freedom, of English law and custom superimposed upon French and Spanish, there evolved a class of free people of color, who had more property and enjoyed greater educational and social advantages as a result, than any similar class elsewhere in the country. With this they occupied a status peculiar to themselves, and had greater freedom from discriminations than any other similar class.

In 1836, in the city of New Orleans, 855 free people of color paid taxes on property assessed at \$2,462,470, and owned 620 slaves. The city tax records show a decrease of such property holdings in 1860. But in 1864 Robert Dale Owen, in behalf of the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, submitted an elaborate report to Mr. Lincoln, in which the property of the free colored of the entire state in 1860 was placed at thirteen million dollars. (S. Ex. Doc. 53, 38 Cong., 1 Sess..) There may have been a movement from the city to the country between 1836 and 1860. Certainly we know that in the late fifties there were a number of free colored planters whose aggregate wealth must have been considerable. Some of these individuals owned sugar plantations worth from 50 to 150,000 dollars, and from 25 to 100 slaves. And even in regard to New Orleans, the tax records may not tell the whole truth about 1860. Oscar J. Dunn, the colored lieutenant-governor of Louisiana during reconstruction times, testified before a committee of congress in 1869 that colored people owned between fourteen and sixteen million

dollars' worth of property in New Orleans alone. He mentioned the names of some whose wealth he estimated at amounts ranging from 50,000 to half a million dollars. (Contested Elections in Louisiana, 1869, p. 179 to 181.) He also mentioned a class doing business as whites, and it may be that some had crossed the line, even in the tax records. (In this connection what DeBow says as to free mulattoes having passed into the white column between census of 40 and 50. Compendium of 7th Census, 1850, p. 62, note.)

The census of 1850 gave the occupations of free colored males over fifteen years of age, for the states of Connecticut and Louisiana and for the cities of New York and New Orleans. Seventy occupations were represented, including many that are supposed to be privileges of recent years. The list includes architects, bookbinders, brokers, capitalists, clerks, clothiers, collectors, confectioners, daguerreotypists, doctors, druggists, engineers, hatters, jewelers, lawyers; lithographers, mariners, merchants, ministers, musicians, music-teachers, overseers, painters, pilots, planters, printers, ship-carpenters, students and teachers. In Louisiana there were 244 planters and 25 overseers. In New York there were, all told, 60 clerks, doctors, druggists, lawyers, merchants, teachers etc., equal to one in 55 of the free colored population in pursuits requiring education. In New Orleans the number was 165, equal to one in eleven of this population engaged in such occupations. (Compendium of 1850, pp. 80 and 81.)

While this discussion is of the free Negro in the slave states, I shall venture across the border to Philadelphia, in which these people had an interesting career. A local census in 1837 showed the ownership of \$300,000 worth of real estate, while in 1847 the amount indicated was \$400,000, in the hands of 315 free colored

persons. (Stone, vol.70, No. 8, p. 13.) In 1855 a committee of colored citizens of the city memorialized the legislature for the restoration of the suffrage of which they were deprived by the constitution of 1838, after having exercised it for forty-odd years. This memorial recited that the Negroes of Philadelphia then (1855) owned \$2,685,693 worth of real and personal property; had incorporated 108 benefit societies, with 9762 members, with an annual income of \$29,600 and a permanent invested fund of \$28,366 deposited in white banks. The list of occupations followed by these people was extensive, and included artists, captains of coasting vessels, clerks, livery stable keeper, lumber merchants and proprietors of transportation lines, musicians, music teachers, physicians and school teachers. There was also one "Indian Doctor" but no lawyer. (Stone, vol.42, No. 13, p. 15.) Which reminds me of one of the incidents which go to make up the comedy and tragedy of the free Negro's life. One of the first,- I believe the first,- graduate of Oberlin College studied law, and sought admission to the bar in Philadelphia. He was a mulatto, and a man of character and attainments. He was refused admission because of his color, and decided to leave the country and find an asylum among his own people in Hayti. But there, too, he was not allowed to practice, and likewise on account of his color. He was too dark for Philadelphia and too light for Hayti. (Mention certain color line case in colored woman's club.) In early days Philadelphia had quite a sprinkling of free mulattoes from Jamaica and other West Indian islands, and many of these long ago lost their racial identity as Negroes, and passed into the white population of the city, a transition which was not peculiar to any one place or section. Philadelphia

was not noted for brotherly love when the brother was colored. In fact, both before and since the war, there has been as much color discrimination there along some lines as in any place in this country. As late as 1866 we find the Philadelphia Negroes engaged in a struggle for the privilege of riding on the street cars.

Maryland furnishes probably the best illustration in the Union of the slowly grinding effect of economic processes in converting a slave into a free state, despite the efforts of the artificial restrictions of legislation. Situated on the border, its sentiments inclined it to sympathy with the more Southern states, a tendency which was held throughout the Civil War. Not only was it one of the earliest and foremost slave colonies, but it remained a slave state to the end of the chapter, in so far as sentiment and action could make it so. At the census of 1790 Maryland stood third in the list of slaveholding states, behind only Virginia and South Carolina. In that year its slave population was 103,000, while only 8000 of its Negroes were free. Without the change of a law, except toward occasional severity; without the least faltering in its abstract loyalty to the interests of its slave-owning people; it quietly watched the gradual normal, inevitable altering of its economic structure. Its slave population increased through only two decades, and in 1810 was scarcely more than 8000 greater than in 1790. It lost half this increase in the next ten years, and in 1820 was only 4000 greater than in 1790. By 1830 there were fewer slaves than at the first census, and the decline was steady until 1860, with only a slight break from 1840 to 1850. On the other hand, the free Negro population increased without an interruption from 1790 to 1860. From

103,000 slaves and 8000 free Negroes in 1790, the relative figures were converted into 87,000 slaves and 84,000 free Negroes in 1860.

If we contrast Maryland, as a state in which slavery had ceased to be of dominant interest and was slowly running to its natural termination, with the newer state of Mississippi, in which the institution only began to grow just as its decline set in in the other state, the force of the natural processes in each state will be illustrated at a glance. While this change of position was taking place in Maryland, exactly the reverse process was in progress in the newer state. Mississippi had as a territory in 1800 less than 3500 slaves, and less than 200 free Negroes. In 1820, three years after admission to the Union, the state contained 17,000 slaves and 450 free Negroes. In twenty years, to 1840, there was an increase of slaves to 195,000, with only 1400 free Negroes. From 1840 to 1860, the slave population rose to 436,000, while the free colored fell to 773.

But this digression is only for the purpose of suggesting the influences behind the growth of Maryland's free Negro population. The free Negro here experienced the same vicissitudes of treatment, and was the object of the same efforts at legislative control, as in the other states. Education never was denied him by law, and his children were taught in various schools with varying fortunes. It is probable that efforts to curtail the economic opportunities of free Negroes were greater in Maryland than in states farther south, just as, and for the same reason, the economic struggle of Negroes is today greater in Pennsylvania than in Mississippi. Maryland was farther north, and there were more white masons and

carpenters etc., who had to live and who wanted the free Negroes' jobs. Numerous efforts were made, some partially successful, some not at all, at such restriction. As late as 1860 a large number of citizens of Baltimore petitioned for legislation to prevent free Negroes from pursuing any mechanical trade in that city, but the petitioners were white mechanics. Emancipation simply brought a larger mass of Negroes into white competition than had experienced it before the war, and as a race they have even yet scarcely felt the first touch of it. What the white mechanic tried to do by open legislation before 1861, he has been doing by other means, and on a larger scale, since 1865.

In Baltimore in 1859, 348 free Negroes owned \$449,000 worth of property. In three outlying counties, 221 free persons had \$120,000 worth. In two Baltimore savings banks in 1860 there were 442 free Negro accounts, amounting to \$20,827.

To attempt to touch upon the life and condition of the free Negro in each Southern state would be merely to offer a group of isolated facts, with not much unity or connection between them. The free Negroes of North Carolina numbered 30,000 in 1860, but their fortunes varied greatly. Many of them had nothing. On the other hand, the agents of the early freedmen's aid commissions from the North during the war have recorded their surprise at finding wealthy Negro landowners in Carteret County, and Negroes engaged in almost every trade, one or two operating small ship-building plants and employing white workmen. In the little town of New Berne and the adjacent territory in 1864, 305 Negroes were reported to have total incomes of \$151,562 annually. There were 110 whose incomes were from 500 to 1000, and 24 with from 1000 to

3000. (Annual Rept., Supt. of Negro Affairs in N.C., 1864. Rev. Horace James, Boston n.d., pp. 11 and 20.)

South Carolina had 9900 free Negroes in 1860, with 400,000 slaves. Charleston was the center of the free Negro life of the state. There they followed many occupations, engaged in numerous business enterprises, organized and maintained social and benefit organizations, had schools and churches, and developed into a part of the larger life of the town. In 1860, in Charleston, 347 free Negroes held 333 slaves and paid taxes on \$655,875 worth of real estate.

Much might be said on the subject of slaveholding by free Negroes, but it must suffice to know that the practice obtained in every Southern state. Like every other feature of the general subject, this presented different aspects in different places. Just as it is not possible to estimate with any accuracy the value of property owned by free Negroes, so it is impossible to know the number of slaves they held. It was, however, easily several thousand.

The matter of the aggregate wealth of ante bellum free Negroes, the country over, would furnish an interesting and a fruitful text for a homily on the study and writing of that branch of American history having to do with the American Negro. But I have no idea of inflicting one upon you. The stereotyped phrase which introduces most modern discussions of the post bellum economic achievements of the Negro is that the race "began life in 1865 without a dollar, and has earned all its present wealth since emancipation opened to it wider fields and larger avenues for the exercise of talents which slavery obscured but could not destroy." This may sound well, or it may not, but it fails to make connection with

the facts. Beyond any reasonable question, the average economic status of free Negroes was low. Many of them were as degraded and worthless as contemporary descriptions allege. But there were also many thousand who had trades and business establishments, and other higher than menial pursuits. And in addition to the money value which these occupations represented, the race not only through its free members but through many of the slaves also, possessed several millions of actual, tangible property. I would not be understood as hazarding a guess in this connection, but I believe that it would be conservative to put the value of Negro property at the outbreak of the war at somewhere between 25 and 35 millions of dollars, and possibly much more. But the great bulk of it was in the hands of mulattoes, just as it is today.

There is almost as much modern romancing about ante bellum Negro education as about property. It is also equally as difficult to get at the truth. We can ascertain from the census of 1860 that of the 12,199 free colored males over 20 years of age in Virginia, 6710 could read and write. In South Carolina, of 1926 such free Negroes, 1294 could read and write. Dr. G.S. Dickerman has made some figures on it, and he says that there were 40,448 free colored males over 20 years of age in thirteen Southern states in 1860, of whom 19,396 were able to read and write. This would indicate that about 50% of the free adult males had been taught to read and write. Yet, with the exception of Maryland, I think, we could prove from the laws of every Southern state that no Negroes at all could either read or write. But not only free Negroes, but also a good many thousand so-called slaves were taught. Dr. Dickerman

estimates this number at from 50 to 80,000. (Southern Workman, October 1903, p. 501.)

In conclusion I want to say a few additional words on the general attitude of the country toward free Negroes, and on the efforts which have been made to get rid of them. As to the first, however, it is hardly necessary to add anything to what already has been suggested. The Southern slaveholder looked upon them as mischief makers and breeders of discontent. The abolitionist welcomed them of course, but the North in general looked upon them as more or less a nuisance. The Northern mechanic and laboring man regarded them as possible competitors, and loved them accordingly. The attitude of this section of the Northern population was the source of considerable anxiety to Mr. Lincoln in his efforts to bring Congress to his views on the matter of gradual, compensated emancipation. He was met with the fear that emancipation would unload the Negro on the North, and that is one thing, - if you will pardon me for saying so, - which the North never has wanted. Mr. Lincoln urged gradual emancipation in a special message to Congress in 1862, in which he sought to allay those fears. He concluded his argument against the probability of the Negroes going to Northern states, with the significant query: "Besides, cannot these states exclude them if they see fit?" His own state had but recently voted overwhelmingly to do just that very thing.

Mr. Lincoln was too wise a man to fail to apprehend some of the serious consequences of emancipation, and apparently he cherished the hope that the situation might be somewhat alleviated by colonization, and thus getting rid of at least part of the disturbing factor. He had negotiations opened with the Danish representative at Washington, with a view either to purchasing the

Danish West Indies, or to investigating the islands as a suitable place for American Negroes. The committee which considered his message in the House was highly in favor of some plan of voluntary colonization, which of course was all Mr. Lincoln ever contemplated. (H. Rep., 148. 37 Cong., 2 Sess.) An act was passed to encourage and aid American Negro emigration, preferably to Central America, but nothing came of it. The effort died a natural death.

One of the arguments advanced by those behind this legislation was that the free Negroes desired it. One exhibit to their report gives the proceedings of a great convention of free Negroes held at Cleveland, Ohio, in 1854, in which the entire white race, and the American branch of it particularly, were denounced for their treatment of the Negro, and the Negro was urged to go to South or Central America. But the Negro, very naturally, never has taken very kindly to such advice. Nor is it likely that the government was called upon to assist many members of this convention to a passage to Brazil or Venezuela.

The American Colonization Society represented the only great organized effort to get rid of the free Negro. But I do not mean to question the motives of its organizers and supporters. ~~(Memorial Anniversary, Af. Col. Soc., Washington, 1867, pp. 190 and 191.)~~

I know that many of them were thoroughly sincere in the primary aim of benefitting the Negro. On the other hand the Society was also supported by men who simply wished to rid themselves of a nuisance. From 1817 to 1866 the Society sent to Africa 13,136 Negroes, at a cost of \$2,558,907.10, equal to \$194 a head. (Memorial Anniversary, Af. Col. Soc., Washington, 1867, pp. 190 and 191.)

The change of practical attitude as well as of sentiment

toward free Negroes is indicated in the matter of their employment as soldiers. There was some, but not great, objection to enlisting them in the Continental armies. Washington and other Southern men were not opposed to it, and the former licenced their enlistment in 1775, subject to the approval of Congress. That body sanctioned the action to a limited extent, by authorizing the re-enlisting only of such as had "served faithfully in the army at Cambridge." (Livermore pp. 102 and 103.)

Yet through the influence of increased numbers, and of the passions aroused by years of controversy and discussion, a sentiment had developed through the entire country which practically forbid the use of Negroes in the only war in which they had any real concern. It was only after numerous efforts and with many misgivings, that Negro troops were finally organized at all in the Civil War, and it may be said that even then they were not placed upon the same footing as white soldiers.

In the light of conditions in the "sixties", the address of a Southern soldier, Andrew Jackson, to the free Negroes of Louisiana before the battle of New Orleans is interesting and suggestive. It is dated at Mobile, Sept. 21, 1814, and is "To the Free Colored Inhabitants of Louisiana". "Through a mistaken policy," he tells them, "you have heretofore been deprived of a participation in the glorious struggle for national rights in which our country is engaged. This shall no longer exist. As sons of freedom, you are now called upon to defend our most inestimable blessing. As Americans, your country looks with confidence to her adopted children for a valorous support, as a faithful return for the advantages enjoyed under her mild and equitable government. As fathers,

husbands, and brothers, you are summoned to rally around the standard of the Eagle, to defend all which is dear in existence." And "to every noble-hearted, generous freeman of color volunteering to serve during the present contest with Great Britain", was promised the same bounty in money and lands received by white soldiers.

At a review of white and colored troops in New Orleans subsequent to his proclamation, Jackson again addressed his free Negro soldiers. (Both these addresses seem to have been written by Edward Livingston, one of Jackson's aids.) This time it was: "To the Men of Color,- Soldiers! From the shores of Mobile I collected you to arms; I invited you to share in the perils and to divide the glory of your white countrymen. I expected much from you; for I was not uninformed of those qualities which must render you so formidable to an invading foe. . . . But you surpass my hopes. I have found in you, united to these qualities, that noble enthusiasm which impels to great deeds. . . . The President of the United States shall be informed of your conduct on the present occasion; and the voice of the Representatives of the American nation shall applaud your valor, as your General now praises your ardor." (Livermore, pp. 164 to 166.)

Forty-odd years later we catch a glimpse of the attitude of this same class, on the eve of a greater conflict than that of 1814-15.

A New Orleans paper printed in December 1860, a communication from a number of free persons of color, with this editorial comment: "A very improper and unjust feeling is sometimes manifested toward a class of our population who have always demeaned themselves with patriotism and true devotion to their native state.

We refer to the free colored population, who are not unfrequently and very thoughtlessly confounded with the free Negroes who come to this city from the North and form a class of people who require watching. The native free colored people of Louisiana have never given grounds for any suspicion, or distrust, and they have frequently manifested their fidelity in a manner quite as striking and earnest as the white citizens." The communication itself ran in part as follows: "There are certain persons who are disposed to believe and to make others believe, and some will do so from ignorance or mischief, that the free colored population (native) of Louisiana are not well disposed toward her, but this is not so. They love their homes, their property; they own slaves, and they recognize no other country than Louisiana, and care for no other than Louisiana, and they are ready to shed their blood for her defence. They have no sympathy for Abolitionism; no love for the North, but they have plenty for Louisiana; and let the hour come, and they will be worthy sons of Louisiana. They will fight for her in 1861 as they fought in 1814-15." (The Daily Delta, Dec. 28, 1860.)

But the times and manners had changed, for the free man of color in Louisiana anxious to enlist on the Southern side, as well as for the free Negro who wanted to fight for the North.

There is an infinite pathos about the life of the free man of color of the higher class. And this finds peculiar expression in Louisiana simply because there were more of the higher type there than elsewhere. The emancipation of four million slaves meant destruction to the hundreds of persons who for years had been already free. They had won for themselves through a long period of struggle

a place unique in the life of their communities. Such as these were respected by all classes, and regarded as all but white by the slaves. In the perpetration of the monumental blunder of attempting by a stroke of legislation to elevate a horde of half-barbarian slaves to the level of their former masters, those free people who stood partway between the two were ground into the earth. They were simply swamped by the mass of slaves between whom and themselves the barrier of civil status had suddenly been destroyed, without leaving them the protection of a racial status which could not be affected by laws. Many of them struggled to hold themselves apart from the slave class, and some successfully. Here and there in a country parish church today one may see the old distinctions still maintained; the whites in one part, the free colored and their descendants in another, the Negroes separated from the other two. Some of them left the country, and lost themselves in France. A few have crossed the line. Many have gone down. The brief unwritten story of their lives would fill a tragic page in the history of the world-old struggle of races and peoples, against the extinction which for so many seems an inevitable fate.