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The Negro in the South.

American Negro Origins.

Probably less is known of the life history of the negro than of any other element in our population. As a governmental activity American ethnology has largely confined itself to the Indian, nor has private research done more than touch the surface of negro ethnology. The United States contains the largest body of negroes which has ever lived within historic times outside the African continent, yet the museums of England and Germany contain collections illustrative of native negro life which are incomparably superior to anything we have in this country. Popularly speaking, so little is known by our people of the negro's native life that we have come to think of them as a people without an ancestral history, and such knowledge as the mass of Americans have has been so distorted as to be worth but little. It is based upon study which until very recent times has been largely confined to a search for evidence in support of one side or the other of the ancient and bootless controversy over the question of the relative positions in the human scale of the Caucasian and the Negro.

There is a great deal of truth in Sir Harry Johnston's remark that "The negro, more than any other human type, has been marked out by his mental and physical characteristics as the servant of other races." He adds that there are exceptions to the rule, and that the least divergence from the negro stock in an upward direction, as in the case of the Gallas and Somalis, is characterized by

greater hostility to the slavery relation. This matter of divergence from the true negro type touches the root of the study of American negro tribal stocks. "The "true negro" was found in a rather limited area, extending along the west coast for about ¹⁵ degrees north from the equator. But this territory could not have supplied the trade after it began to assume the character and proportions of a legitimate international traffic. That traffic tended at once both to destroy and to disperse the coast population. But it did more. It went out into the interior and extended its ramifications south of the equator and across the continent, almost, if not quite to the eastern coast. Brazil drew her main supply from Portuguese West Africa, developing a trade which extended as far below the equator as that of North America extended above it. In addition to these sources ^{of} the traffic, other trading routes drew also on the East coast and on Madagascar.

The common conception which regards all negroes as of a common African ancestry is, therefore, wholly erroneous. It is probable, on the contrary, that the so-called American negro represents a blended type which contains a greater intermixture of different stocks than any other element of our population. Sierra Leone owed its inception as a colony for liberated slaves to the removal there of a number of negroes from England, who were emancipated by Lord Mansfield's decision in the Somersett case in 1772. There were at the time between twelve thousand and twenty thousand negro slaves in England. The colony developed into a place of refuge for all the negroes set free from captured slavers after the traffic became illegal. It thus became an assembling ground for negroes

from all parts of Africa which supplied slaves to the markets of the world, and its population afforded the best possible field for illustrating the number and diversity of these tribal types. In the middle of the Past century the labors of an English missionary in Sierra Leone, the Rev. S. W. Koelle, showed that the population of the colony embraced negroes speaking two hundred different dialects, and differing in tribal habits, customs and practices. We have studied the different characteristics of different American Indian tribes, and no one would put in the same class the ~~unlike~~^{unlike} Sioux and the degraded "Digger". Yet we ignore differences equally as pronounced among negroes.

There is of course to be considered the argument that the intermixing of negro stocks has progressed so far in this country that we now have a blended product in which original differences have become indistinguishable. The value of a knowledge of the component elements of this stock does not wholly depend upon the degree to which such original elements have or have not fused in the mass. The contradictory and puzzling features which ~~are studied~~ of the American negro presents are not founded upon the condition and characteristics of the masses of the race. They arise, rather, from the numerous instances of individuals who differ ~~from the~~ masses, *and* who in themselves seem to invalidate conclusions based upon observation of the race as a whole. It is only when we know the composition of the mass, and realize that in it, or upon its outskirts, are many individuals who, though commonly identified with the race, are really not negroes in racial heritage, that we can properly appraise these exceptional cases in their relation to the larger group.

Such tribes as could not be enslaved successfully, as the Manyema of the upper Congo, were adopted as allies by Arab traders, and became themselves slave traders and raiders of the most inveterate and relentless character. The Hausas and Fulahs of the Egyptian Sudan were extensive owners of and dealers in negro slaves, and they would resent as quickly as a white man an attempt to identify them with negroes. But the Arab dealer was no respecter of persons, and when opportunity offered he did not hesitate to sell to the white slaver his allies of a different stock, along with the negroes whom he had bought from them. In this and other ways many hundreds, probably many thousands, of individuals of superior native tribes, persons who in Africa would be differentiated from the negro, found their way into American slavery. Another element in the so-called negro population of America was furnished by the natives of Madagascar. These people are not negro, but Malay, in origin, and to this day thousands of their descendants may be recognized by their perfectly straight hair, rather high noses and Indian type of complexion. At home they were known as "Malagasy", and the writer has found numerous individuals of this strain who had some vague, traditional knowledge of their origin, usually indicated in the persistence of their original designation, under some such corrupt form as "Molly-
g aster" or "Mollyglaster".

The negro proper, to quote again from Sir Harry Johnston, "is in general a born slave. He is possessed of great physical strength, docility, cheerfulness of disposition, a short memory for sorrows and cruelties, and an easily aroused" (and I should add easily dissipated) "gratitude for kindness and just dealing. He does not suffer

from homesickness to the overbearing extent that afflicts other peoples torn from their homes, and, provided he is well fed, he is easily made happy." The description applies fairly well to the great mass of negroes who found their way into the slave markets of the world. It was true of those on the West Coast who were sent to America and the West Indies, and likewise of those farther east who were distributed to other markets through the island of Zanzibar, - probably the greatest slave clearing-house of the modern world. It held good with those who were enslaved by their neighbors the Haussas, and with those who were collected in the Sudan and carried north and east by Arab traders overland to Morocco, Algeria and Egypt. But it is probable that every slave caravan which set out across the desert, and every slave ship which set out across the sea, had in its complement some individuals who did not answer to this description, - some who were not docile or cheerful, who were not blessed with short memories for wrongs, and who were not happy even when well fed. We may, then, state the case of our negro population after this wise: It is a mass of people possessing racial characteristics which enabled ^{it} to submit to slavery with a maximum degree of cheerfulness, and without the chafing of other races under restraint, - which characteristics have also enabled ^{it} to accommodate itself to its anomalous status in the body of American people since emancipation. But there has always been in this mass a number of individuals who differed from the great bulk of the slave population in respect to native capacity and general characteristics, and who differ in equal degree from the mass of that population under freedom. Any generalization which may be made as to the mass of this population is likely

to fail when applied to these individual types.

The early laws of some of the colonies recognized the fact that other than negroes had been brought from Africa into America, and "Moors", or "blackamoors", were sometimes exempted in specific terms from the operation of statutes provided for negro slaves. There were many instances of so-called "Moors" who achieved considerable local distinction, though it is always possible that these were Fulahs or members of other non-negro tribes. One of the earliest of these was the case of "Job", who was a slave in Maryland. It was found that he was an educated man, with a mastery of Arabic, and Oglethorpe was instrumental in securing his liberty and sending him to London in 1731. A somewhat similar case was that of Abdul Rahaman, a "Moorish" slave in Mississippi in the early part of the nineteenth century. There was also Omeroh, in South Carolina, and "Prince Hannibal", in Virginia, at much later dates. The largest group of persons of African descent who claim not to be negroes, and who assert a superiority to the latter, are the so-called "Moors" of Delaware. These people have endeavored to hold themselves aloof from the negroes about them, and in a measure have succeeded in doing so. One of their racial prejudices is against negro teachers in the public schools allotted them, a prejudice which is usually respected by assigning them mulatto instructors.

The mention of mulattoes suggests the last, and a most important, element in our polyglot negro population. It is important from whatever point of view we consider it, - whether upon its merits, as that element which has contributed most to lifting the race above a status of hopeless intellectual inferiority, or whether as a human

document, in considering the results of racial contact and association. It is a mistake to regard the mulatto as a being peculiar to America, or his existence as a reproach to any particular branch or section of the white family. Amidst all the confusion over "race problems" throughout the world, the one patent, indisputable fact is that nowhere on earth has the white man refused to mingle his blood illegitimately with an inferior race, where masses of the two have been brought into contact. This has been true of the Boers in South Africa; of the English in Australia, New Zealand and other colonies having a native population; of the Spanish and French in the West Indies and America, North and South; of Americans in their own country. In discussing the subject of racial intermixture between whites and negroes we seem to lose sight of the extent and duration of their racial contact, and contract our vision to a few states on the North American continent. As a matter of fact the blending process between the modern negro and the modern white man *was begun on* the African coast more than four hundred and fifty years ago, - when the Portuguese began to embark upon the trade which was destined to play so tremendous a role in the history of four continents and their people. There were mulattoes in Portugal and Spain half a century before America was discovered, and they were among the classes the *carrying* of whom to the New World was at first forbidden by the Spanish authorities. In South Africa they became strong enough to create a sub-tribe many years ago, known as Griquas. In the Portuguese colonies in West Africa they have become so numerous as to constitute in some respects the most important element of the population. They have figured largely in the revolutionary affairs

of Cuba and of some South and Central American States. They set up for themselves the government of Santo Domingo, independent of that of Haiti, and are the dominant element in Liberia. They represent the real intelligence of the negroes of Jamaica, and are classed as "colored", as distinguished from the "black" peasant population of the island. In 1850 they constituted 11.2 percent of the negro population of the United States; 13.2 percent in 1860; 12.0 percent in 1870; and 15.2 percent in 1890. No separate enumeration of the mulatto element was attempted in 1900, but it will probably be tried again in 1910.

Our principal conclusion as to the composition of the negro population of the Southern States, and of the country, is that it is ^{made up} ~~composed~~ of quite as many, and equally as diverse, elements as our white population. It is impracticable at this day to ascertain the extent to which these various elements enter into the whole, or the influence which any of them has exercised in developing the traits and characteristics of the conglomerate mass which we now designate the "American negro". Even in the case of the mulatto element this can be only approximately done. But in studying this new type, this "American negro", or "negro American", it is of primary importance that we recognize its complex character, and not be led astray by the appearance in it of individuals markedly different from and superior to the average class. These individuals are more likely to be evidence of the strength of heredity than of the general capacity of the mass. They are likely to be either the result of atavistic influences, bringing to light the superior character of some negro enslaving, rather than enslaved negro, ancestor, or the result of an intermixture

of white blood. These individuals may be leaders among the people to whom unscientific social usage has assigned them, instruments for good or evil, as their individual characters may determine. But they tell us no more of the potentialities of the American negro class than does the degraded and brutish specimen of the West African, whom we often meet in the South, tell us of its permanent limitations.

The Negro Under Slavery.

It is not of particular moment how the negro came to this country. The prime consideration is the fact of his presence. Slavery as an institution is treated elsewhere in this series, but a few words on it are necessary here. We have stated above that negro slavery existed in Portugal and in Spain half a century before the discovery of America. The trade in negroes had been carried on by Arabs, between the Mediterranean and the region South of the Sahara, for seven hundred years prior to its over-sea beginning by Portugal. The transfer of negro slavery from Europe to America began in 1501, with the sending out of Ovando as governor of the island of Hispaniola. It is suggestive that at first only slaves "born in the power of Christians" were allowed to be imported,- thus restricting the new class of population to European negroes. This restriction, however, was of short duration, as in 1518 we find the Jeronimite Fathers advising the importation of "heathen negroes, of the kind of which we have already experience". The first slave trade monopoly granted by Charles Fifth, was for 4,000 negroes in eight years, and was determined on upon the advice of Las Casas. Negroes were first taken to the Spanish American mainland about 1523-25. They were not

carried to the English North American colonies until 1619, nearly a century later. So-called "estimates" of total negro importations are really little more than guesses. The number brought into Spanish colonies is put variously at from ~~four and a half to six, or~~ ^{4,500,000 to 7,000,000,} ~~even seven, millions.~~ The English early became the greatest ^{slave} carriers in the world, and after the assiento of 1713 they supplied not only their own, but the Spanish colonies as well. The number of negroes taken into the English continental and insular possessions during the century preceding the American revolution has been placed at approximately three millions. Bancroft estimates that three hundred thousand were imported into the thirteen American colonies down to 1776.

From the fog of controversialism which has enshrouded the subject of negro slavery for so many years there emerge a few indisputable truths. The most important of these is that from first to last, from its introduction into the West Indies to its introduction and gradual spread in the North American colonies and states, the institution was essentially and fundamentally an economic one. We need not bother ourselves over the mistake of the good Las Casas, in recommending negro slavery. His recommendation would not have brought or kept one thousand negroes in Hispaniola, if it had not been supported by the very practical opinion of others, after a brief experience, that one negro slave was equal to ⁴ ~~five~~ Indians in the amount of work he could do in the mines. So it was when slavery secured its great foothold in Barbadoes, in the first half of the seventeenth century. Negroes were taken there in large numbers, and the institution of slavery fostered upon the island, solely

because Barbadian planters had learned from those of Brazil that sugar could be grown with great profit and success by the use of slave labor. It became a part of the recognized industrial system of all American colonies which produced a staple agricultural commodity,- whether sugar, tobacco, indigo, rice or cotton. After it had become thus developed and established in the British West Indies, and not until then, it was transferred to the British American mainland, and became part of the established order there. Slaves were held in all the colonies,- but just as slavery as an economic institution was an invariable part of the industrial system of all staple producing colonies, so on the other hand did it fail to find a place in the industrial system of those colonies which did not produce staple crops. The presence of a few slaves whose labor was scarcely more than an incident to their existence, was one thing; the existence and maintenance of a "system" of slave labor was another, and a very different thing. In those colonies in which their labor was not a necessary feature of the industrial organization, negroes were relatively few in number and negro slavery never assumed the characteristic features of an "institution". In those in which the whole industrial economy was based upon and dependent upon slave labor, a system for the organization and direction of such labor was an inevitable and necessary incident, and then^{er} slavery became an "institution". Bearing in mind these elementary but fundamental principles and distinctions, it is not difficult for us at once to see that the institution of slavery never had any real existence in what is now the United States outside the Southern colonies, and also to understand

why it did not develop elsewhere. The abolition of slavery in communities where the labor of slaves was so insignificant a feature of their industrial life as in the Middle and Northern colonies, was as natural and easy a process as its growth was natural and easy in the colonies further South. The progress or retardation of slavery was much more than a mere question of politics or morals, - howsoever much these factors may have entered into either movement from time to time.

But what of the influence of this institution and of the relations which developed under it? As the institution itself was mainly economic, it is natural that the economic aspect of it bulks largest in the perspective of forty-odd years. Just how great a factor in the industrial life of the colonial and ante bellum South was the negro per se will always remain a mooted question. What the development of the South would have been without the negro, - whether it would have taken a wholly different course, or moved as rapidly in the one it actually followed, - had the labor of the South been wholly white instead of mainly negro, - free instead of slave, - are questions which will never be answered. Historians and economists have almost hopelessly confused the subject of slavery with that of the race of the slave. It is scarcely possible now to say, if on the one hand ^{negro} slave labor made for the progress of the South, how much was due to the negro and how much to slavery, - or, if on the other slavery made against its progress, where lay the greater responsibility, upon the system or the race. But we are here concerned much more with the Southern negro than with the Southern white man, and happily there is no question as to the economic affect of slavery upon the slave.

It is the one aspect of the entire subject upon which there is not room for two opinions. Slavery transformed the savage negro into a civilized man; it taught him to work, and showed him what could be accomplished by the labor of his hands; and then it left him as a free man with almost a monopoly of the field in which he had been employed as a slave. In 1865 no other body of negroes in the world occupied as advantageous a position economically as those in the Southern states.

But in a broad view there was more in the presence of a great mass of negroes in the South than the mere results of their labor. It is easy to say that the white race was necessarily affected by the contact of millions of another and an inferior race, but it is difficult to say just how the ^effects of such contact were manifested. Here again we touch one of the controversial aspects of the ante bellum situation. Between the extremists who held on one side that such contact was ennobling to the white man and beneficial to the negro, and on the other that it was degrading to both, it may be safe to assume that neither was altogether right nor altogether wrong. It was largely a matter of individuals. The ownership and control of negroes unquestionably was brutalizing to some, while to others it brought a sense of responsibility which developed and ennobled character. For the relatively few negroes whose employment in the relations of domestic service brought them into contact with the best class of white people, slavery created refining influences which no other section or group of negroes enjoyed elsewhere. These are the negroes who are pictured in the romances which deal with ante bellum life. But they were the chosen few,- as compared

with the great mass who lived and died untouched by such associations. Probably the most that may be said of the latter was that they were brought by slavery to a knowledge of the English language and of the Christian religion, such as could otherwise have been accomplished for an equal number of their race in Africa only by missionary efforts so tremendous as to have approached the impossible. On the whole, considered in all its phases we may accept the judgement of one of the sanest men who came out of slavery,- that out of it the negro, as a racial group, got more than did the white man.

The ~~F~~ree Negro Before 1865.

Before passing to a consideration of the negro since emancipation, let us glance at the connecting link between freedom and slavery,- the "free negro" of the ante bellum South. This section of the race is almost invariably ignored in discussions of the American negro. They formed a group of which but little is known by the present generation, and concerning which there was very great diversity of contemporary opinion.

As far back as we may go in the study of negro slavery we find that free negroes were invariably an element in the population. They were in Spain as early as 1474, and probably some years before. They appeared at an early date in Hispaniola, and seem to have accompanied every movement of slaves in the West Indies and on the mainland. They were provided for simultaneously with negro slaves in the legislation of the British American colonies. Notwithstanding laws which were almost invariably hostile, and despite constant legal efforts to restrict the emancipation of slaves, the free negro

element steadily increased after the revolution and down to the outbreak of the Civil war. The census of 1790 returned 700,000 slaves, in round numbers, and 60,000 negroes in the free class. By 1860 we had a slave population of 33,950,000, with 488,000 negroes who were free. The difference between the existence of laws and their enforcement finds no better illustration than the case of the free negroes in the Southern states. Every sort of restrictive and discriminatory law against these people may be pointed to on Southern statute books; yet these were in the main dead letters, for which there need be no better evidence than the fact that of the above mentioned number of free negroes in 1860, more than half, - 251,000, - lived in the Southern states.

The condition of these people varied from one of poverty to that of comparative wealth, - just about as economic conditions vary now. Their general status, taken as a whole, was better in Louisiana than anywhere else in the country, North or South. 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. In 1860 the property holdings of the same class for the state at large were estimated at from thirteen to fifteen million dollars. There were free colored planters in Louisiana whose property in land and slaves was valued at from twenty-five thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Many of these people enjoyed educational advantages and lived amidst refined surroundings equal to any possessed by their white neighbors. They were invariably of the mulatto class, and thus far we have found no instance of a free negro acquiring either wealth or position. What was true of conditions in New Orleans

and Louisiana was true also of Baltimore, Charleston, Mobile, and other less important "free negro" centers in the South, and of Philadelphia, New York and other places in the North. In the aggregate large numbers of free people made the best of their opportunities and overcame heavy obstacles,- notwithstanding the general opprobrium in which they were held as a class. The granting of freedom to the negro masses meant the extinction of the lines which had been created by time and condition between ~~the~~ free people of color and ~~the~~ negro slaves. In the dead level of civil equality which followed, the smaller element was either crushed or swallowed up by the larger. Save here and there, the two have coalesced into a common mass.

The Negro Since Emancipation.

The few years of freedom since 1865 are a short span in the life of the Southern negro since his ancestors left Africa for Spain, the West Indies and North America. But it has been ample to prove the fallacy of predictions ~~made~~ as to the future of the race, made while it was yet in slavery. By one party to the controversy it was declared that the negro would dwindle away in numbers, and be wholly unable to provide for ^{him} himself, if given freedom. The other expected him to become at once the equal of the white man.

Progress is hard to measure when the point of beginning is undefined and intangible. But the race has not died out. It has increased from four millions in 1860 to nearly nine millions in 1900. Not only has it been able to provide for itself against hunger, but it has also accumulated some hundreds of millions of property. But

this means little or nothing for the masses, the great bulk of the race,- save an increase in numbers. This wealth is far more unequally divided than among the whites,- and, save what is probably a per capita pittance, is in the hands of the mulatto element. And measured by ordinary standards of physical well being the average negro of the masses is no whit better provided for today than he was in 1860,- with many not nearly so well off. But he is free, and it is with him to advance or go backward.

From 1865 to about 1880 the negro passed through a period of turbulence which was just the reverse ~~of~~ what he most needed in his transition from slavery to freedom. It was a period which not only hampered the normal evolution of his free status, but which also sowed the seeds of a racial antagonism which was most inimical to his future welfare. The most remarkable feature about that period was that it did not wholly destroy every vestige of the kindly relations between the races which had existed before the war. By the close of this period the negro was no longer an important factor in Southern politics. Another decade witnessed his total elimination from a field which had meant for him nothing but strife and the catspaw's fate.

Since his withdrawal from politics the negro has been influenced in his life and movements by considerations mainly economic,- where tangible considerations have controlled him at all. He is still chiefly employed in agriculture and his home is in the cotton states. One third of all the negroes in the United States live in the three states of Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama. Nearly seven-tenths of the total live in these and the states of Virginia, North and South

Carolina, Louisiana and Texas, combined. Notwithstanding the northward movement of which so much is said from time to time, it remains after all of small significance in considering the location of this class of our population.

There is a steadily increasing group of educated, cultured and refined negroes,- corresponding in relative status to the better class of "free people of color" in Louisiana before 1861. The two groups also possess the similar characteristic of being composed mainly of persons of mixed blood. This group has given the race its leaders and furnished its better professional men; has written its books, many of them of genuine merit; edits its magazines and the best of its papers. It is moulding negro thought in this country, and is working toward the creation of a negro public opinion. The destinies of the negro and of the mulatto in America seem inseparably identified. Whatever the future may hold for the two will likely be shaped by the mulatto element,- in so far as it is shaped by either. Both the opportunity and its responsibilities are theirs.

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