THE DISRUPTION OF THE SOCIAL ORDER
IN THE SOUTH DURING THE
RECONSTRUCTION ERA

THESIS

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By

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Perhaps no other period in American history has been so permeated with political corruption, economic upheaval, and social disorganization, as was the Reconstruction Era following the American Civil War. It is the purpose of this thesis to define wherein the social order of the South was disrupted, --- the conditions that brought about such a sweeping transformation of social structures --- and to show the growth of new social attitudes and practices evolving from the chaotic dismemberment of the old.

Although primary significance is placed upon changes in the social order, it is necessary to consider certain political and economic trends that were interwoven into the fabric of social life during Reconstruction --- factors influencing, determining, or evolving from, social changes. In the first chapter is sketched briefly the ante-bellum society of the South, and in following chapters is shown the evolution of social culture during the first twelve years following the Civil War.

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DUAL SOCIETY: THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF RECONSTRUCTION

THE PLANTATION

Southern culture prior to the Civil War was characterized by the institution of slavery which, in turn, was fostered by the stately plantation to the extent that after the seventeenth century the plantation problem became the Negro problem. The South was singularly enigmatic in that two distinct cultures and civilizations centered about the plantation; one was subjected, dominated, and exploited by the other, whose social status, literacy, and refinement gave it the prestige of power and the asset of accomplishment. The fact that one element of the population was servile to the other created a dual society of class and caste. Open hostility between the two groups was relatively uncommon, yet each struggled continuously against the other for ascendancy, for some elusive plane of social relationships that would be just to both, for some equitable basis of unifying the duality.

The juxtaposition of two races on the plantation constitutes the distinctive feature of the system, alike in tradition and fact. It is primarily in this respect that the ante-bellum Southern estate is unique, unique as a resource for imaginative effort, unique as an economic and social unit. The importance of this racial duality cannot be overstated.¹

And yet, strictly speaking, there were more than two classes in Southern society: the social system of the Old South may be likened to a three-story white structure erected on a mudsill of black. The social order was composed of planters, farmers, "poor whites," and slaves, of which only the last named were permanent and incapable of rising. The three white classes were not sharply differentiated, and people were constantly shifting from one class to another. "There was little friction among them for the superiority of the planter was conceded as freely as it was claimed."^2

At the outbreak of the Civil War there were about 350,000 slaveholding families, representing over 1,750,000 individuals; nearly 4,000,000 Negro slaves; something over 260,000 free Negroes in the South; and over 5,250,000 "poor whites"—small farmers, artisans, laborers, and tradesmen.^3

But for all practical purposes the planter and the slave were the basic personalities in the social structure; the other two—free Negroes and "poor whites"—were mere appendages of little significance to the dual nature of society. "For a man to be property may seem barbaric and outrageous."^4 If this be true, then Southern society was based upon barbarism and outrage, for here over four million men were the property of fewer than two million.

^2R. S. Cotterill, The Old South, pp. 278-279.
^3S. D. Spero and A. L. Harris, The Black Worker, p. 3.
The money returns for the "degradation of humankind" came mainly from a crop that was peculiarly suited to the plantation system --- cotton. Of 3,177,000 slaves in 1850, it was estimated that 1,800,000 were engaged in cotton culture exclusively. The value of this crop was far above that of sugar, rice, and tobacco combined, the other three crops for which slave labor was widely utilized.5

Wealth could be rapidly acquired by planters who began with limited means, whose success was due to industry, economy, and self-denial. Most of the profits were at first devoted to the increase of the capital, and in a few years, as if by magic, large estates --- plantations --- accumulated. "The fortunate proprietors then build fine houses, and surround themselves with comforts and luxuries to which they were strangers in their earlier years of care and toil."6

The actual plantation devoted to cotton was based on a rigorous and dull routine, with strict diversification of labor: house servants, field hands, cooks, blacksmiths, carpenters, the midwife "for white and black of the neighborhood, as well as doctors of the plantation," overseers, and, when they could be afforded, drivers to maintain discipline and order on the place, and be responsible for the quiet of the Negro houses and for the proper performance of tasks. In January there was ginning, sorting, and moting of cotton; in February more ginning and moting, ground-cleaning, fence-mending, and ditching. In March there was bedding of cotton ground; in April planting, fencing, ditching, picking joint grass, working cotton --- the eternal hoe industry. In May, June, July, and August more hoeing and working and some picking; in September, October, and November more picking, clearing new ground; in December moting and ginning. There were tasks and

6Ibid., I, p. 312.
punishments for falling short. Every detail of life was regulated not by any internal compulsions but by a system of physical punishments and rewards. Once established, custom and routine gave permanence to the structure of relations. Life, on the whole, was a grim business. Such were the imperatives of the economic system.  

The population of the ante-bellum South was essentially rural; in 1860 only three Southern cities had a population above 100,000, and Baltimore, the largest city in the section, had a population of only 212,418 persons. Altogether, there were twenty-seven cities having over 4,000 inhabitants each. Agriculture was predominant not only because the Southern colonies had long been accustomed to producing export crops for British markets, but primarily because of the natural environment: there were few minerals and little water power. Hence, "it was natural for men to devote themselves to agriculture in those physiographic regions of the South where land was available and minerals and power scarce."  

In this rural area, whose dominant symbol was the plantation, "the negroes furnished inertly obeying minds and muscles; slavery provided a police; and the plantation system contributed the machinery of direction." But,  

The plantation was profitable because slave labor was profitable. Slave labor was slow, clumsy, and inefficient, but all these defects were more than offset by its steadiness. It was not subject to strikes or labor disturbances; it was not interrupted by drunkenness.

8 Emory Q. Hawk, Economic History of the South, p. 229.  
or merrymaking or wage disputes. As long as the slave was contented, his labor would result in a profit to his owner. Every Southern slave owner realized the necessity of keeping his slaves in a good humor, for there was no way of dealing with a sullen slave without impairing his usefulness as a laborer. Fortunately, the task of keeping slaves contented was not a difficult one for an owner who understood them. A plentiful supply of good food, a reasonable amount of rest, occasional gifts and holidays were normally all that was required. That the slave of the South was reasonably contented may well be believed, although the testimony is almost exclusively that of his owners. From the physical side his working hours were long but not strenuous; from the psychological side, since he had never known freedom, he looked upon slavery not as a degradation but as a routine. He took no thought of the future nor needed to. In sickness and in health, in his childhood and his old age he was assured of an income proportioned to his necessities and not to his productiveness. From the moment he was born he became the recipient of an annuity that continued until his death. In the security of bondage he probably gave little thought to the unknown attractions of freedom.10

Each plantation had a hierarchy based upon social status; not only were the master and his family elevated to a social position beyond the reach of slave aspiration, but even among the blacks themselves there were definite gradations of rank, privilege, and esteem. Foremen, millers, and smiths were men of position and pride. The butler, the maid, and the children's nurse were in continuous contact with the white household, enjoying the best opportunity to acquire its manners along with its cast-off clothing. At the foot of the scale were the field hands, with a minimum of white contact, and privileged only to plod as brethren of the ox.11

Comparison of plantation life with medieval feudal life

10R. S. Cotterill, op. cit., pp. 268-269.

has often been made. The justifications for these comparisons may be summarized in the following manner:

Actual evidence of a sort of feudalism may be obtained from a study of the judicial and governmental qualifications; from the sports and recreations; from the literary fashions; from the conventions of home life; from religious and legal modes; from conversations; from the cleavage of social orders; from the autonomy, as far as consistent with state administration, of the individual estates; from the excessive chaperonage of woman; from the deep-rooted land-holding instincts; from certain conceptions of education; and from other public and private considerations. This attitude, controlling many social ideals, goes far toward explaining the peculiar status of plantation life.12

Although each plantation was a separate unit with distinct characteristics of its own, certain similarities were noticeable in all. The following description is given, not because it is of any one plantation, but because it represents a generalization upon all plantations:

The "big house," as the darkies loved to call it, might be of any type from a double log cabin to a colonnaded mansion of many handsome rooms, and its setting might range from a bit of primeval forest to an elaborate formal garden. Most commonly the house was commodious in a rambling way, with no pretense to distinction without nor to luxury within. The two fairly constant features were the hall running the full depth of the house, and the verandah spanning the front. The former by day and the latter at evening served in all temperate seasons as the receiving place for guests and the gathering place for the household at all its leisure times. The house was likely to have a quiet dignity of its own; but most of such beauty as the homestead possessed was contributed by the canopy of live-oaks if on the rice or sugar coasts, or by oaks, hickories, or cedars, if in the uplands. Flanking the main house in many cases were an office and a lodge, containing between them the administrative headquarters, the schoolroom, and the apartments for

any bachelor overflow, whether tutor, sons, or guests. Behind the house and at a distance of a rod or two for the sake of isolating its noise and odors, was the kitchen. Near this, unless a spring was available, stood the well with its two buckets dangling from the pulley; and near this in turn the dairy and the group of pots and tubs which constituted the open air laundry. Bounding the back yard were the smoke-house where bacon and hams were cured, the sweet potato pit, the ice pit except in the southernmost latitudes where no ice of local origin was to be had, the carriage house, the poultry house, the pigeon cote, and the lodgings of the domestic servants. On plantations of small or medium scale the cabins of the field hands generally stood at the border of the master's own premises; but on great estates, particularly in the lowlands, they were likely to be somewhat removed, with the overseer's house, the smithy, and the stables, corn cribs and wagon sheds nearby. At other convenient spots were the buildings for working up the crops --- the tobacco house, the threshing and pounding mills, the gin and press, or the sugar house as the respective staples required. The climate conduced so strongly to out of door life that as a rule each roof covered but a single unit of residence, industry, or storage.13

Radiating from the planter's house were the pretentious and diversified fields, gardens, and orchards that provided the income and livelihood of those on the plantation.

Inside the "big house,"

the furniture was old-timey and plain; mahogany and rosewood bedsteads and dressers black with age, and polished till they shone like mirrors, hung with draperies white as snow; straight-backed chairs generations old interspersed with common new ones; long sofas; old shining tables with slender, brass-tipped legs, straight or fluted, holding some fine old books, and in springtime a blue or flowered bowl or two with glorious roses; book cases filled with brown-backed, much-read books. This was all.14

Most planters had their own rules for the administration

14 Thomas N. Page, The Old South, p. 145.
of their plantations. Order, system, and regular routine were emphasized in almost all these rules, which were often printed and given out to overseers and drivers so that they might know what would be expected of them. However, the monotony of plantation life was occasionally relieved by various amusements in which the Negroes participated; log-rollings, corn-huskings, and dances were jubilant times for the sable populations of the cotton belt. On Sundays, the blacks might hunt, fish, work for themselves, visit, sleep, and attend church; they were always passionately fond of music and dancing -- "when they are not mad with protestantism." Some planters allowed four or five dances each year, in which the Negroes commonly imitated the whites, but occasionally reverted to pagan rhythmic movements. The evangelical churches opposed such worldly delights, and many a fiddle and banjo was silenced by missionaries. On one Georgia plantation, twenty violins were hushed by missionaries who compromised by letting the slaves, at prayer-meeting, move rapidly around in a circle, joining hands in "a token of brotherly love," extending right and left hands alternately. But,

The Fourth of July was a day that even the evangelical denominations could hardly mar. The night before and on the early morning of the fourth the tantalizing odors of roasting pork and mutton, mingling with that of burning oak, told of the preparations for the annual plantation barbecue. This day, usually a holiday, was a great occasion for both blacks and whites, who filled the groves, ate the same food, and drowsed together while the political speech was being delivered.

15 Ralph B. Flanders, Plantation Slavery in Georgia, p. 172.
16 Ibid., p. 172.
Marriages, likewise, were occasions of great frolic.

Even though no legalized marriage of slaves was recognized, and the master had the power to separate the families by sale or removal, some sort of ceremony was usually performed, more often by an illiterate Negro preacher. Offspring commonly shared the lot of the mother, and marrying off the plantation was discouraged or forbidden. Where exogamy was permitted, on Saturdays the roads would be filled with slaves going to visit their wives. During the early nineteenth century a curious ceremony was observed on the coast plantations of Georgia: the Negro man would go to the cabin of the woman he desired, roast peanuts in the ashes, place them on a stool between her and himself, and while eating, propose marriage. If she accepted, she went immediately to his cabin and was thenceforth regarded as his wife.\textsuperscript{17}

"The plantation was the ideal community of the South, its laws and usages as dominant socially as its economic influence was dominant politically."\textsuperscript{18} It was, of course, essentially a type of factory whose profits depended upon robust laborers. Its mere existence as a going concern required the proprietor to sustain the strength and safeguard the health of his operatives and of their children, who were also his, destined to take their parents' places, in time.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Ralph B. Flanders, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 172-173.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Francis P. Gaines, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 146.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Ulrich B. Phillips, \textit{Life and Labor in the Old South}, pp. 197-198.
\end{itemize}
tion was also a school. An intelligent master would consult his own interest by providing special instruction for every talented slave, and by inculcating into the common masses as much routine efficiency, regularity, and responsibility as they would accept. Not only were many youths given training in the crafts, and many taught to read and write, even though the laws forbade it, but numerous planters devised plans to give their entire corps spontaneous incentive to relieve the need of detailed supervision. Hence some planters instituted elaborate schemes of self-government and self-driving with the prospect of self-emancipation of the corps as a unit. Under such a system, the Negroes were found to be more industrious and faithful. 20

The plantation was a pageant and a variety show in alternation. The procession of plowmen at evening, slouching crosswise on their mules; the dance in the new sugar house, preceded by prayer; the bonfire in the quarter with contests in clogs, cakewalks, and Charlestons whose fascinations were as yet undiscovered by the great world; the work songs in solo and refrain, with not too fast a rhythm; the baptizing in the creek, with lively demonstrations from the "sisters" as they came dripping out; the torchlight pursuit of 'possum and 'coon, with full-voiced halloo to baying houn' dawg and yelping cur; the rabbit hunt, the log-rolling, the house-raising, the husking-bee, the quilting party, the wedding, the cock fight, the crap game, the children's play, all punctuated plantation life --- and most of them were highly vocal. A funeral now and then of some prominent slave would bring festive sorrowing, or the death of a beloved master an outburst of emotion. 21

Although the great majority of whites owned no slaves at


21 Ibid., pp. 202-203.
all, or but one or two, the plantation was the typical community of the lower South, dominating and determining the economic and social life of the Southern people.²² Here on the plantation was the locale of the dual society.

THE SOUTHERN ARISTOCRACY

In the nineteenth century the ante-bellum South was the only section of our country which had developed a stable, established society and a philosophy of life.²³ Evolving slowly, a form of society that gave its leaders a certain security of social position and prestige had become characteristic of Southern culture, in which the old planter aristocracy held an assured position of influence such as no other class in America had.²⁴ When a stable society had been formed, there came, consciously or unconsciously, the formation of a Southern philosophy of life that led directly into an art of living. Only in the South was emphasis placed upon a well-rounded personality as a product of wholesome living.

Perhaps no people had cared less for mere worldly success than the leaders of the old plantation South. The owner of a big plantation, as also its mistress,... had ample responsibility, but there was also leisure; and leisure and what to do with it were as important as work, because the Southerner's main preoccupation was

²⁴Ibid., pp. 383-384.
how to live a full life. He found this in his planta-
tion responsibilities, in public office, in sport, in
reading, in a social life which he made an art. Manners
and breeding were worth more than money, and social
hours were as important as business hours.
The outlook of the planter class had permeated the
whole South, and that section alone of the three into
which the nation had become divided had found a satis-
factory way of life....

Plantation manhood may very easily be visualized in one
of two types, the most traditional of which was the landed
aristocrat. But the average was a small planter, living in
a modest home, cultivating a hundred or so acres of land,
earning by the sweat of his brow and a very little Ethio-
pian perspiration a none too luxurious living, courteous,
hospitable, withal simple, frolicking in mild fashion on
rare occasions, voting for Jefferson and those he felt
the followers in spirit of the great democrat, genuinely
but not painfully pious, after a Methodist, Baptist, or
Presbyterian fashion, raising --- not rearing --- a
family of children, and sleeping at last with his fathers.

The poorer planters often lived in rude log houses, with
few refinements, but obsessed with the urge for more land on
which to plant more cotton and to work more slaves. On the
other hand were the wealthy proprietors whose huge plantations
stretched over the wide lowlands, often ruled through over-
seers by an absentee owner. Among these people, "the long
possession of leisure and a modicum of luxury developed a
taste for the novel and the beautiful which any true gentry

26 Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 188.
is prone to indulge not merely by buying and perhaps making
books and pictures but by travel and by the cultivation of
the well-ordered life."\textsuperscript{28}

Habitual authority and command vested in him inspired
the aristocratic planter with a high sense of personal dignity
that made him courteous in his manners, liberal in his senti-
ments, and generous in his actions toward those of his own
status but domineering toward those considered inferior.
Coupled with the disdain of all things coarse and little and
mean, there were often mingled the failings of a too sensitive
pride, jealousy of all superiority, impatience of contradic-
tion, and a quick and violent resentment. However, the better
sort of planters were continually warring with these weakness-
es and engaging in the humane discipline of themselves as
well as of their slaves.\textsuperscript{29}

The aristocratic planters were haughty and passionate,
yet chivalrous, possessing a high code of honor among them-
selves, --- a code likely to grow lax toward "inferiors" ---
and endowed with great gifts of intellect. But these were
only a mere fraction of the total population of the South.\textsuperscript{30}

The Southern planter has, unfortunately, been almost
invariably portrayed as an idle gentleman rolling in wealth;
but "there is no more pathetically untrue picture" than this,

\textsuperscript{28}Ulrich B. Phillips, \textit{Life and Labor in the Old South},
p. 365.

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 363.

\textsuperscript{30}Maurice S. Evans, \textit{Black and White in the Southern
States}, p. 47.
for this state of affairs was the exception rather than the rule. Most planters worked as hard as any of their slaves, and few of them desired to live a life of luxurious idleness, had it been possible. Though aristocratic and dignified, Southern society never attained to luxuriousness.\textsuperscript{31}

The warmth of Southern climate produced at least three distinctive customs found throughout the South in all strata of society: (1) high seasoning of food to stimulate the appetite; (2) afternoon siesta in the summer; and (3) constant leaving of doors ajar, even in winter when roaring logs in the fireplace merely took the chill from the draughts. Seldom was a door ever closed, except those of storerooms and those of the Negro cabins, whose inmates bore hostility to the night air. As a rule, only in the locks of the former were keys ever turned by day or by night.\textsuperscript{32}

Large isolated plantations became self-sufficient kingdoms offering the owners every opportunity to develop their resourcefulness and to acquire the means to live in a comfortable and grand style patterned after English manners and customs.

Entertaining was taken as a matter of course; hot-blooded gentlemen fought duels; gaming, horse-racing, cock-fighting were common amusements, and everything from hunting and fishing to weddings was used as an excuse for making a gala occasion. Life was never monotonous,

\textsuperscript{31}Francis P. Gaines, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{32}Ulrich B. Phillips, \textit{American Negro Slavery}, p. 313.
but the happiness of every plantation depended on the disposition of its owner. Some of them were undoubtedly kind and considerate, just as others were indifferent or cruel; but in either case, slavery must have brought many bitter hardships to black people who were born in a land where white customs and ideas were unknown. 33

Fanny Kemble, who lived for some time on a Georgia plantation, pictured the Southern planter as one who, because of isolation, independence, and conservatism, had to resort to "the lowest excitements of drinking, gambling, and debauchery for sole recreation." 34 Seeing white men surrounded by creatures absolutely subject to their despotic wills, she denounced Southern society as a "savage existence within the border of a modern civilization."

Many of the planters made their slaves "the victims, and the instruments alike, of the most licentious passions." 35 In this respect, the growth of the number of mulattoes and quadroons had significance; but the extent of unchastity was one thing, and the importance of it, another. The Negro was not the only nor the chief sufferer: tragic as was the usual destiny of master-slave offspring, this was not the direct consequence. One of the severest penalties was to be found in the demoralization of the social ideals of the dominant class, a condition that continues to diffuse its unwholesome influence even to the present day.

33Julia Peterkin, Roll, Jordan, Roll, p. 10.
35Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 236.
Speaking in broad terms of the whole relationship between master and slave, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submission on the other. Our children see this and learn to imitate it.... The parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath,... and thus nursed, educated and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities.

But John Taylor replied in a counter statement:

To me it seems that slaves are too far below, and too much in the power of the master, to inspire furious passions; that such are nearly as rare and disgraceful towards slaves as towards horses; that slaves are more frequently the objects of benevolence than of rage; that children from their nature are inclined to soothe and hardly ever suffered to tyrannize over them; that they open instead of shut the sluices of benevolence in tender minds; and that fewer good public or private characters have been raised in countries enslaved by some faction or particular interest than in those where personal slavery existed.36

The plantation mistress made the plantation a home; without her, it would have been merely a factory. She worked with a never-flagging constancy, carried the keys to the indoor establishment, directed the household routine and the various domestic industries, taught morals and religion by precept and example. "Her hours were long, her diversions few, her voice quiet, her influence firm."37


The general picture of this figure is that of a busy and unselfish woman; "mother of a romping brood of her own and over-mother of the pickaninny throng"; arbitrator of petty difficulties, teacher of ignorant blacks, executive of the complicated system of plantation domestic economy, visiting nurse to the cabins, director of plantation charities; "mistress of distant realms --- the house and the cabin --- and guardian of the bonds between the two." 38

Each of the two major divisions of the dual society --- white aristocrat and black slave --- lived more or less unto himself save on occasions of festivity and sorrow; then white and black mingled freely, each sharing in the joys or bereavements of the other and offering co-operation and assistance. When there was trouble in the "big house," the real kindness and sympathy of the servants came out. They seemed to anticipate every wish; in a thousand touching little ways they showed their desire to give all the help and comfort that lay in their power. They claimed a right to share in their master's sorrow, and to make it their own. 39 And likewise the whites were ready to share the sorrows and joys of those in the slave cabins.

But a few masters, not realizing that their slaves' welfare meant their own, were inhumane: one ex-slave recalled that his master would sometimes lock his slaves in small dark rooms and keep them in solitary confinement for a few days without food or water, or would make them work night and day

38 Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 177.
until they fell from exhaustion, or would force them to walk in the hot sand until they fell unconscious from the pain. "My master's brother's wife," declared the ex-slave, "was so mean tel the Lord sent a peal of lightnin' and put her to death. She was too mean to let you go ter the well and git a drink of water, and God come long and squished her head open. One of the masters was so mean he made his slaves crow."40

Even Fred Douglass was known to make the statement: "Everybody in the South seemed to want the privilege of whipping somebody else."41 Douglass neglected to mention that most masters were content with the mere possession of such privilege.

Although there were many traditions that actual fact denies, the reality of plantation hospitality remains unchallenged. No appreciable class distinction was made in the entertainment, and there was no limit to the generosity. No fact of Southern life more profoundly impressed visitors.42 Being characteristic, hospitality was practiced as a matter of course; it was universal and spontaneous, occupied much time and exhausted much of the means of the planters. Supplementing the constant intercourse of each respective neighborhood, with a perpetual round of dinners, teas, and entertainments, were visits of relatives and friends from other sec-

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40 Charles S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 22.
41 James F. Rhodes, op. cit., I, p. 343.
42 Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., pp. 171-172.
tions, coming with their families and personal servants to spend a month or two. Dinner invitations were unknown --- it was "spending the day." On Sundays, "every one invited every one else home from church, and there would be long lines of carriages passing in at the open gates." Only the mistress knew how the house ever held the visitors; her resources were enormous. No one, friend or stranger, was ever turned away.

If all beds were occupied, the younger members of the family had to be content with pallets on the floor or in the garret. Some children spent half their lives on pallets, and frequently at Christmas time the master and mistress would give up their bed to guests. Entertainment was featured everywhere on a grand, but not extravagant, scale.

Camp meetings were the chief social and religious event of the year, combining festivity and religious experience. Slaves were allowed to attend and sit in a reserved section of the audience. Each race was given its turn at the "mourn-er's bench," and Negroes in the audience were particularly welcomed by most preachers, for "they were likely to give the promptest response to the pulpit's challenge and set the frenzy going." It was at this time that "ecstatic shouting, screaming, falling, rolling, laughing, jerking, and even barking of mass hysteria under the stress of religious enthusiasm, now most commonly regarded as characteristically

43 Thomas N. Page, The Old South, pp. 172-173.
Negro emotionalism, came into vogue."45

Sundays were occasions for displays and festivities:
"The planters made dignified pilgrimages to church, usually in the great coaches, and dozed piously through sermons --- they were nothing if not orthodox; but the large import of the day was social rather than ecclesiastical."46

In the South's most prosperous period only 2,300 families owned as many as one hundred slaves. Combined with about 1,000 other families who owned plantations but fewer slaves, these held in their hands the leadership and wealth of the South.47 From his youth the slave-holder was accustomed to have his word regarded as law; when he insisted, others yielded. He went fully armed at all times, and when two irresistible wills clashed, a duel ensued --- all the outgrowth of slavery.48

The slaveholder denied that his power over the slave was absolute as in the case of the Roman master. The slave of the South was held for specific purposes only, and the power of the master was limited to certain property rights that he held in the services of the slave. The property rights of the master did not destroy the personality of the slave nor make him a chattel. No other right than that of a right to his own labor was alienated from the slave. He retained his rights to life, livelihood, happiness, marriage, religion, everything that was consistent with the service that he was obliged to render. There was no such thing as the master owning the corpus or the animus of the slave. He held no such property as the owner of an ox or a swine.... "The property

45 Charles S. Johnson, op. cit., pp. 151-152.
46 Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., p. 163.
47 Julia Peterkin, op. cit., p. 15.
of man in man is only the property of man in human toil. The laborer becomes capital, not because he is a thing, but because he is the exponent of a presumed amount of labor.\footnote{William S. Jenkins, \textit{Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South}, pp. 108-109.}

The slaveholder, in his philosophy, believed in the duality of society:

\begin{quote}
Nature, governed by unwavering laws, which command the oak to be stronger than the willow, and the cyprus to be taller than the shrub, has at the same time imposed on mankind certain reflections, which can never be overcome. She has made some to be poor, and others to be rich; some to be happy and others to be miserable; some to be slaves and others to be free.\footnote{Ibid., p. 65.}
\end{quote}

John Quincy Adams charged that, though the Southern planters admitted that slavery was an evil, when probed to the quick about it, they evinced "at the bottom of their souls pride and vain glory in their condition of masterdom."\footnote{Ibid., p. 66.}

Civilizing the Negroes was not merely the result of definite schooling, but a fruit of plantation life itself. White households taught more by example than by precept, all of which had the effect of social settlements in modern slums --- furnishing models of speech and conduct, occasional advice, and co-operation, which vicinage all the slaves were invited to accept. But in most cases attempts at education and civilizing of the black on the plantation were disappointing, for:
The bulk of the black population was notoriously primitive, uncouth, improvident and inconstant, merely because they were Negroes of the time; and by their slave status they were relieved from the pressure of want and debarred from any full-force incentive of gain. Many planters, however, sought to promote contentment, loyalty, and zeal by gifts and rewards, and by sanctioning the keeping of poultry and pigs and the cultivation of little fields in off times with the privilege of selling any produce. 52

Most members of the Southern aristocracy were just, considerate, and humane in the treatment of their inferiors; though set apart by social status for power and influence, they were by far the minority in the population. Though relatively few in number, they constituted the dominant factor in the white-black duality of society.

THE SLAVES

As the basis of the economic life of the South, and hence as a powerful influence in the social life, the slave held an important and singular position in Southern society. He was at once the inferior and the basic partner of the dual society. He was the servant of the very system that he had brought into being. His labor had fostered the plantation which, in turn, had brought about two definite social results:

A small number of rich planters, who when resident on their estates, lived in a sumptuous patriarchal style, and often treated their servants with consideration, but who, when non-resident, demanded returns which led to slave-driving in its worst forms. A larger number of slaveholders whose methods varied considerably, and the

bulk of the white population, illiterate, poverty-stricken, passionate, and lawless, often living by illegal trafficking with the slaves. Then the Negro slaves of whom a few were skilled and highly valued, who lived in some measure of material comfort, the house servants, often pampered and consequential, with little of discomfort in their lives, and the mass, living like the working farm animals, sufficiently fed, and clothed in the coarsest manner, without initiative or hope, driven to their tasks under fear of the lash, giving as little labor as possible, adepts at shirking and malingering.53

The problem of slavery was not so simple as the abolitionists conceived it; true, it was a system of labor, but it was also a race problem, a factor that was extremely complicating. Sweeping emancipation could scarcely be entertained as a solution because of the consequent disruption of society and the destruction of capital. The few intelligent Negroes and mulattoes would have benefitted from such a procedure, but the vast majority would have become saturated with poverty, shiftlessness, and idleness.54

As a means of social control slavery during the ante-bellum period was invaluable; as a profitable industrial system it was as profitable in proportion to the progressive spirit and ability of the individual planter; as a training school for the untutored savage it served to a large degree as a civilizing agency. But so interwoven was the institution of slavery in the fabric of society that a radical change was inconceivable.55

“As to its essential character and basal principle, no truer word was ever spoken than that which Mrs. Stowe puts in

53 Maurice S. Evans, op. cit., p. 46.
54 Ralph B. Flanders, op. cit., p. 299.
55 Ibid., p. 300.
... because my brother Quashy is ignorant and weak, and I am intelligent and strong, --- because I know how, and can do it, --- therefore I may steal all he has, keep it, and give him only such and so much as suits my fancy. Whatever is too hard, too dirty, too disagreeable, for me, I may set Quashy to doing. Because I don't like work, Quashy shall work. Because the sun burns me, Quashy shall stay in the sun. Quashy shall earn the money, and I will spend it. Quashy shall lie down in every puddle, that I may walk over dry-shod. Quashy shall do my will, and not his, all the days of his mortal life, and have such chance of getting to heaven at last, as I find convenient. This I take to be about what slavery is.

Of course, Mrs. Stowe's prejudices may have entered in here, but Merriam, at least, finds no fault in her portrayal.

On many plantations Negroes were called by the more dignified term of "servants" --- never slaves except in legal papers.57

Domestic servitude was defined and defended by many in the South as a system of civil government. It was contended that all government is restraint, and that slavery was but one form of restraint.58

To the Southern mind, the system of domestic slavery afforded the best pattern of relationship under which an inferior and a superior race could live together --- provided that a proper ratio of those races was maintained. It was believed that society would be the victim of intolerable evils if the proportion of the races became unbalanced; this attitude ex-

57 Thomas N. Page, The Old South, p. 143.
plained the fact that surplus Negro population was allowed to overflow into the western territories. 59

To the Southerner, slavery was not a curse, but an absolute necessity to the cultivation of the soil; it was held to be the great source of prosperity, wealth, and happiness. Without it the fields would have been a wilderness; hence the real curse was not slaves, but climate. Nor was slavery a curse to the Northerners themselves --- "it exists with us in a mild and parental form." 60

Many people of the North felt that in all its aspects slavery was horrible, and they exhorted against it without comprehending its true nature. Those who traveled in the South were, almost without exception, surprised by what they found. 61 They became convinced that the lot of the slave was in many cases far preferable to that of the industrial worker of the Northern industrial centers or of England. Charles Eliot Norton, who was unfavorable to slavery, journeyed to Charleston in 1855, expecting to find conditions far different from those that he actually experienced. One paragraph is lifted from his writings as being representative of what the Northerner usually found in the South, although his anticipations had been different:

59William S. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 70.
60Ibid., p. 77.
The change to a Northerner in coming South is always a great one when he steps over the boundary of the free states; and the farther you go towards the South the more absolutely do shiftlessness and careless indifference take the place of energy and active precaution and skilful management. The outside first aspect of slavery has nothing horrible and repulsive about it. The slaves do not go about looking unhappy, and are with difficulty, I fancy, persuaded to feel so. Whips and chains, oaths and brutality, are as common, for all that one sees, in the free as in the slave states. We have come thus far, and might have gone ten times as far, I dare say, without seeing the first sign of negro misery or white tyranny.  

Numerous Southerners, some of whom were themselves slaveholders, began to decry the system in whose clutches they were held. Henry Clay, for example, characterized slavery as "a curse to the master and a wrong to the slave."  

Helper believed slavery to be "a great moral, social, civil, and political evil --- an oppressive burden to the blacks, and an incalculable injury to the whites.... an impediment to progress ... and a dire enemy to every true interest."  

In actuality, slavery combined an element of oppression with an element of protection, but the North saw only the oppression. True, there were oppression and cruelty, but such were the exception rather than the rule; punishment was frequent, and sometimes slaves were whipped to death; on the rare occasions when a Negro committed a capital crime, he was

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64 William S. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 94.
65 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 309.
sometimes burned at the stake. But, in general, wanton cruelty did not rule.\textsuperscript{66} One ex-slave, in recalling the days of his bondage, declared:

\begin{quote}
Don't you believe no nigger when he says he ruther be no slave. Things happen then too awful to talk about. If they catch you with a pencil in your hand it would be too bad. When de white folks' chillun would come tru wid books from school by the quarters and dropped a piece of they school-paper and if dey seed you pick hit up dey would clare you tryin' to learn to read an' write, and over Sunday for a month you'd be put in a straight-jacket.\textsuperscript{67}
\end{quote}

Thaddeus Stevens scored the system that kept the Negroes in darkness and ignorance: "The infernal laws of slavery have prevented negroes from acquiring an education, understanding the commonest laws of contract or of managing the ordinary business of life."\textsuperscript{68}

Economically, slavery was not a paying institution. Its efficiency ranged from one-half\textsuperscript{69} to two-thirds\textsuperscript{70} of that of white day laborers, or even of colored freedmen. Its only economic justification was the fact that the nature of the soil and the climate incapacitated white men from laboring efficiently in the summertime.

Slaves were of most value when they were worked together in large numbers; a thousand was the usual number on the or-

\textsuperscript{66}James F. Rhodes, \textit{op. cit.}, I, pp. 325-326.
\textsuperscript{67}Charles S. Johnson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{68}James F. Rhodes, \textit{op. cit.}, I, p. 556.
\textsuperscript{69}Maurice S. Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{70}Ulrich B. Phillips, \textit{Life and Labor in the Old South}, pp. 182-183.
ordinary great plantation, although sometimes there were four or five thousand. Statutes provided a penalty for forcing one's slaves to work on Sundays, or over fifteen hours a day in summer, and fourteen in winter. Such skilled labor as the South possessed before the Civil War was largely that of slaves: blacksmiths, harness-makers, carpenters, or similar artisans whose work was incidental to plantation life.  

The plantation "hand" lived in the "quarters," in the main a collection of rude, dilapidated cabins; but on some plantations the cabins would be neat, white-washed structures, arranged in two or more parallel rows. There were from one to four rooms, containing, as a rule, some sort of bed, a chair or two, frying-pans, kettles, pot-racks; often two or three gaudy pictures hung askew on the walls. Wardrobes and closets were unnecessary --- there was nothing to put in them! But despite its crudity, 

The life in the quarters was one of its own. There was much hospitality and sociability, much dancing, laughing, singing, and banjo-playing when the day's work was done. This was the home of the plantation melody and clog dance. There was little that was morose or gloomy about the slave, either at work or rest. If his condition was deplorable, it was rare that he recognized it to the extent of allowing it to affect his spirits.  

"Internally the cabins appeared dirty and disordered, 

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71 Benjamin Brawley, A Short History of the American Negro, pp. 50-51.
72 Ibid., p. 52.
which was rather a pleasant indication that their home life was not much interfered with."74

Negro slave artisans were valuable property worth far more than ordinary plantation hands; well-trained mechanics often sold for $2,000, while able-bodied but unskilled field laborers brought only $800 to $1,000.75 Likewise, slaves who were skilled as carpenters, coopers, blacksmiths, cooks, and cobblers, brought especially fancy prices in the slave markets.76 Many masters regarded skilled slaves as valuable sources of income, and instead of keeping them all on the plantation to meet the mechanical needs of the establishment, sent them to practice their trades in the small cities of the South, where they were either hired out to master craftsmen or else contracted their labor directly to the public, in the latter case the master receiving a fixed sum or a percentage of the earnings.

The thrifty negroes made so much on their chickens, peanuts, popcorn, molasses-cakes, baskets, mats, brooms, taking in sewing, and in other little ways, that they were able to buy luxuries. Some of the women bought silk dresses; many had their Sunday dresses made by white mantua-makers.77

Slaves and colored freedmen had no civil, social, or political rights except as conferred by statute; the Consti-

74 Ralph B. Flanders, op. cit., p. 153.
75 S. D. Spero-and A. L. Harris, op. cit., p. 5.
76 Ralph B. Flanders, op. cit., p. 189.
77 Susan D. Smedes, op. cit., p. 71.
tution took no cognizance of them: they were political non-
entities. A system of passes was widespread throughout the 
South, by which the master issued tickets that regulated his 
slaves' travel in the community. Any slave caught without a 
pass was liable to seizure and punishment.78

By 1860, one-ninth of the total Negro population of the 
United States were freedmen --- 487,970 freedmen as compared 
with 3,953,760 slaves. Except in such centers as New Or-
leans and Charleston, they were looked upon as a vicious, in-
dolent element.79 Most of them had become free through eman-
cipation as a reward for meretorious service, or through the 
humanitarian leanings of the master who provided for whole-
sale manumission after his death. A few there were who had 
been able to save up enough money to purchase their freedom, 
and a small number of mulattoes born of white mothers were 
free from their birth.80 A few won their freedom by accom-
plishing, sometimes through cunning and unscrupulous methods, 
the impossible: one master jokingly promised a slave his 
freedom if he could find an ear of corn with an odd number 
of rows of grains. The next spring, when the ears were tender 
and young, the Negro secretly and deftly removed one row of 
grains and left the ear on the stalk for nature to do the 
rest; in the fall, after the scar had healed over, he took

78 Ralph B. Flanders, op. cit., p. 236.
79 Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., p. 102.
the ripened ear to his astonished master and claimed his freedom. 81

To the Negro in bonds the institution of slavery was one long night with little hope of day. His highest impulses, his tenderest emotions, his every incentive to high endeavor, felt the blasting effects of the system. He might work in the field from sunrise to sunset; but none of the fruit of his labor was his own. He might cherish the tenderest sentiments of a father, only to see his child torn from his arms forever. He might possess lofty ambition or distinctive genius, and find effort made to deprive him of every quality of manhood. With his brethren he sang in the night-time his wild "sorrow song," "I've been a-listenin' all the night long;" and in yearning for the joys of heaven he prayed for deliverance from physical bondage. To escape at once from slavery, however, was possible only by regular manumission, by revolt, or by running away. 82

Black preachers might be rebuked or even lynched if they waxed too enthusiastic over the liberation of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage. Masters preferred that preachers use such texts as "servants, obey your masters," "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and, "well done, thou good and faithful servant," when addressing the slave hordes, as such subjects did not incite discontent with their lot. 83 Paul Laurence Dunbar, the gifted Negro poet, makes an antebellum sable preacher embellish his sermon on the Hebrews' deliverance from Egypt with the oft-repeated injunction:

Now don't run an' tell yo' mastahs
Dat I's preachin' discontent! 84

81 Recounted by the writer's grandmother, Mrs. Mary A. L. Bennett. The incident occurred on a Georgia plantation.

82 Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., p. 89.


84 Robert R. Moton, What the Negro Thinks, p. 10.
Thus the Negro yearned for freedom; but when the throes of Reconstruction gave it to him, he knew little of how to use it. Even in freedom, the duality of society that had been upheld by human bondage was to continue unmitigated, although in a different form.

THE "POOR WHITES"a

At once the most numerous and the least important in terms of social status in Southern society were the "poor whites," who were actually the victims of the slave system. Possessing the strength of numbers, they were nevertheless held in virtual subjection by the rich planter class who were in a decided minority, but who owned most of the land. The "poor white" farmers had to depend for credit upon the slaveholders who controlled most of the wealth of the section. Their economic position was frequently worse than that of the slaves, who were at least certain of food, clothing, shelter, and protection, for these were essential if they were to remain assets to their masters. The "poor whites," representing no one's investment, were forced to feed, clothe, shelter, and protect themselves and their families on their meager resources. Hard pressed in every way, had they as a class been educated and alert, they undoubtedly would have developed a leadership that would have perceived that their interests were at one with those of the slaves. But the plan-

a The term, "poor whites," is herein given the meaning attributed to it by many historians; that is, it is used to designate all non-slaveholding whites of the Old South.
tation masters kept their "poor white" neighbors in "ignorance hardly less dense than that of their black chattels." 85

Non-slaveholders and small slaveholders were scattered everywhere throughout the South, but in widely varying proportions of the total population. In the cotton counties of the Mississippi delta they were found only as overseers and as woodcutters for river steamers. In the mountains, in parts of the pine barrens, and on the north and west borders of the Old South, they comprised almost the total population. Elsewhere they dwelt as the neighbors of planters or well-to-do townsman.

Their standards of living, their manners and their morals, varied with the region of their residence, with their health and wealth, with their education and opportunity, with their predilections and proclivities. It is possible to read of localities where the people were "more like hogs and dogs" than like human beings. 86 The mass of whites had little cause to love either the planter, the Negro, or the system in competition with which they were forced to live. The best lands were owned and monopolized by the rich planters, and cultivated by their slaves; the skilled work necessary under the plantation system was performed by trained Negroes, hence the "poor white" was denied the chance to profit by skilled labor. Much of the trade and commerce, especially the retail

85S. D. Spero and A. L. Harris, op. cit., p. 4.

trade, was in the hands of Jews. The "poor white" was the unwanted, unrecognized, forgotten man. "Thus debarred, the majority of the whites sank into lethargy and poverty, living shiftless lives, despised even by the slaves they were too poor to possess."87

The people of the hills and sand barrens --- the true "poor whites" --- had no part in slavery and the plantation system, and they still exist practically unchanged:

Many of them, living in the mountainous regions, content to win a bare existence from the unfruitful surface of the hills which held in their bowels the immense mineral wealth of the state, never saw a negro from year to year, and never came in contact with the planters of the Black Belt and the river valleys until they, stripped of their wealth and slaves by the war, turned from their exhausted fields to the hills they had so long neglected, and disturbed, with their railroads and their furnaces, the remote, unthrifty, unambitious, inscrutable people of the squalid cabin and the long rifle and the chin beard and the hidden distillery and the oddly Elizabethan speech, who for three hundred years have not even noted the growth of America or the progress of the world. In the industrial life, the intellectual life, the political life, and the actively religious life of the South, these people had no part under slavery, and they have none under freedom.88

The 'poor white' envied the slave's security and hated him for his material advantages, whereas the slave envied the "poor white" for his freedom and hated him for the "advantages of his whiteness." Each group, desiring to exalt itself, looked down upon the other, its competitor in economic life, with all the contempt that the planter aristocracy showed to

87 Maurice S. Evans, op. cit., p. 47.
both. The slave was a "nigger;" the "po' white" was "po' white trash."\textsuperscript{89}

Frederick Douglass explained the antipathy between slave and "po' white" in this manner:

There was no earthly reason why the blacks should not hate and dread the poor whites when in a state of slavery; it was from this class that their masters received their slave catchers, slave drivers, and overseers.\textsuperscript{90}

Among the slaves the term, "po' white trash" embraced the acme of odious contempt:

The idea undoubtedly developed in slavery days as suggested by the contrast between the privileged master class and the unprivileged, landless, propertyless, "educationless," free whites whose condition was in many respects oftentimes far more miserable than that of many slaves. There was a group of slaves on nearly every plantation, especially the larger ones, who benefitted appreciably from close contact with the master's household, acquiring the manners of the "big house," absorbing some of its customs, oftentimes receiving specific instruction in letters as well as crafts; who were at times permitted to apply to their own advantage whatever benefits they might gain from their superior abilities. Enjoying, as they often did, the confidence and esteem of these superior families, it was not unnatural that they should esteem their own position as superior to that of lower class whites; and so in response to the taunt of "Nigger! Nigger!" they fortified their own pride at the same time that they wounded their tormentors with the retort:

"I had a little dog,  
His name was dash.  
I'd rather be a nigger  
Than po' white trash!"\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{89}S. D. Spero and A. L. Harris, op. cit., p. 4.  
\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{91}Robert R. Moton, op. cit., pp. 20-21.
Being free, and politically the equal of the planter, the "poor whites" looked on the prosperity of the slaveholding lord with rank and sullen envy. When Southern interests were endangered, it was the "poor whites" who voted for their preservation; yet it was the men who had never labored with their hands who were sent to Congress or given state honors. Hence the political --- and the social --- system of the South was an oligarchy; everywhere the slaveholders were in a disproportionate minority, yet they set the pace for politics and society. As compared with the workers on the farms or in the factories of the North, the "poor whites" "were in material things abjectly poor; intellectually they were utterly ignorant; morally their condition was one of grovelling baseness."

In the mountain coves luxuries were never known, and leisure was mere loafing. Gradations ranged only from homespun comfort to habituated eking of the barest livelihood. With a wool hat, a cotton or tow shirt, and jeans breeches upheld by a single "gallus", a man was fully clad, though he might use coat and shoes against winter's chill. The cotton shifts and poke bonnets of the women, and their shapeless linsey-woolsey gowns, varied not with the fashions of Paris or Philadelphia. The great world of men and books was kept alien by remoteness and illiteracy. "We uns" lived our own clannish lives between the steep walls of the cove except when a feud called for a foray over in back or a sheriff took an offender against lowland law to a lowland jail....

Bassett (Slavery in the State of North Carolina, ch. 3), in discussing the fairly potent and really large factor in

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92 James F. Rhodes, op. cit., I, pp. 344-345.

the population of the South that he calls the Southern yeomanry, comparable to the English farmers, says:

This class of men has received but little attention from those who have written of Southern society, and yet it was the backbone of that society. There was little that was ideal about such men. They were humdrum, but they were honest, pious, and substantial, and they were numerous.94

But however numerous were the "poor whites" and the freed slaves, they were but appendages to the real social structure of the South, dominated by the planter aristocracy and upheld and maintained by the Negro slave. These two widely divergent classes, existing side by side in a rural economic order, formed the essence of the dual society of the Old South.

The symbol of the Old South, the plantation was the most significant economic and social factor in the lives of the people. It was actually the characteristic unit of Southern life.

Even though the vast majority of whites possessed no participation in plantation life, these people really comprised the "voiceless South," possessing neither equal status nor economic community with the planters who dominated the section and whose philosophy and ideals largely shaped those of the Old South.

Society in the ante-bellum South was primarily a structure of social traditions designed by the comparatively small planter aristocracy to maintain their own social, economic, and political ascendancy at the price of the relative impotence of other and larger, though somewhat submerged, classes and groups

94 Francis P. Gaines, op. cit., pp. 144-145.
in the population.

Slavery was the Old South's "peculiar institution," on which rested the plantation as an economic unit. Upon the institution of slavery and upon the labor of slaves depended the wealth, happiness, and leisure of that group of influential Southerners who owned Negro workers and controlled their activities.

Owning no relationship to slavery and receiving little recognition from the Southern aristocracy, members of the lower strata among the "poor whites" were virtually social outcasts, economic nonentities, and political automatons. Many of them existed without position, wealth, or property; encountering from the powerful and somewhat autocratic planters numerous obstacles to progress, they seldom found opportunity to advance their social status or to increase their fortune. Having small part in the established, traditional society of the South, they formed a divergent social and economic group of their own. They envied the wealth and prestige of the planter and coveted the economic security of the slave. In an order erected for masters and slaves, they found difficulty in maintaining an economic existence.

Yet those among the upper level of "poor whites" --- the professional men and the merchants --- often had social intercourse with the planters and their families. Amiable attitudes and generous sentiments characterized relationships between these two groups; in fact, the gulf between planter and
upper-class "poor white" was so narrow as to be in many instances almost imperceptible or even wholly non-existent. Even the lowest among the "poor whites" might attain to a position of respectability and esteem if they possessed ambition, energy, intelligence, and determination to forge ahead and make for themselves a place above the ranks of the very lowest of Southern whites. Bonds of social distinction were not fixed, rigid, and impassable; class and caste among the whites were relatively transient conceptions.

Nevertheless it was inevitable that divergent groups, all components of Southern society, should be inharmonious. Their interests were eternally at variance: the Southern aristocrat was intent upon dominating and exploiting the slave, who in his submissiveness and stolid labor, had no voice of his own, and, while enslaved, was of no social or political importance. Whereas the upper-class "poor white" might readily merge with the planter aristocracy, the lower "poor white" was sometimes consumed with envy, jealousy, and a desire to usurp the property, power, and position of those who virtually held him in economic slavery and social insignificance.
CHAPTER II
THE DESOLATED SOUTH

Four years of fratricidal warfare, fought principally within her own territories, had plunged the South into utter desolation. Her soldiers returned to lands as barren, in many instances, as the battlefields on which they had encountered the enemy. The Civil War had almost ruined the South financially, and "the succeeding orgy of larceny, euphemistically termed 'reconstruction,' completed the process."¹ But even before reconstruction, the South was a devastated region, characterized in almost all sections by "desolation, desolation, utter hopelessness."² In such a breeding-ground of despair, it is not to be wondered at that the social life, the economic order, the political activities, and the morale of the people suffered disruption and regression.

DEVASTATION IN RURAL AREAS

The South lay "prostrate in the dust."³ It had fought and lost the war, and its unavailing devotion and loyalty to the now "lost cause" had brought suffering and hardship, and

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¹Virginius Dabney, Liberalism in the South, p. 177.
²Claude Bowers, The Tragic Era, p. 46.
³Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 155.
in some cases ruin, in the wake of cannon and bayonet. So effectively was the South laid waste in many regions with fire and sword "that a crow flying over those regions had to carry his rations." A Virginia farmer thus described the desolation in one section of his state:

From Harper's Ferry to New Market, which is about eighty miles,... the country was almost a desert.... We had no cattle, hogs, sheep, or horse or anything else. The fences were all gone. Some of the orchards were very much injured, but the fruit trees had not been destroyed. The barns were all burned; chimneys standing without houses, and houses standing without roof, or door, or windows.

Many of the Confederate soldiers, returning home after Appomattox, brought their war-horses with them, and with these animals, sometimes limping and wounded, attempted to make a crop; for General Grant had acceded to General Lee's request that the Southern men be permitted to retain their mounts, as they would need them in the spring plowing.

Immediate problems facing the Southern planter in the spring of 1865 were dilapidated buildings, or no buildings at all; the planting of crops; and a demoralized and impertinent labor supply. "Without money or credit, he needed all the stiffness of a proud caste to hold off bankruptcy." Mentally placing a stigma upon work, he retarded the progress

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of political and economic reconstruction and hindered his own rehabilitation in a disrupted social order. Yet it was this same obstinacy that carried the South through the twenty trying years after the war.

The South was prostrated from Appomattox. Some of its fairest cities and towns were largely in ruins, --- Richmond, Charleston, Mobile, Atlanta, Columbia, and others. Much of the countryside, especially in Georgia, and South Carolina, was a half wilderness where burned chimney stacks marked the former presence of homes. Approximately $2,000,000,000 worth of property in slaves had been wiped out at a stroke of the pen. When the Confederate currency sank to zero in value, government bonds, securities of banks, railroads, and other corporations, savings-bank deposits, bank balances, and life-insurance policies all became worthless. Many could say with one rich Southern lady that there "is nothing left to us now but the bare land, and the debts contracted for the support of hundreds of slaves during the war." The railroad system, such as it had been, was disrupted and largely ruined.... Cotton had been mostly destroyed. There was only land, some proportion of the houses, ruin, and four millions of blacks almost wholly unaccustomed to freedom, unused to any wage system of labor, and among the whites, little or no liquid capital with which to pay wages. A whole new form of civilization had to be built up under most difficult conditions.8

Plow stock had been taken by the invading armies, or else turned loose to wander about the country; cattle and provisions had been consumed; large tracts of once-cultivated land had been stripped of every vestige of fencing; in places even cotton seed was not to be had; and almost no one had credit, where once credit was almost universal.9

8James T. Adams, op. cit., p. 379.

One of the fundamental elements of decay in the South was soil deterioration, caused by too great concentration on staple crops; by absence of the use of fertilizers and ditching and terracing to conserve the soil; and in some instances, by its having lain fallow during the war. Grass had been allowed to take the fields, gates and bars had tumbled to the ground, plows had become worn and rusted; and because of failure to maintain the proper system of selection, cotton seed had become defective and unreliable.\(^{10}\)

The cost of the war is almost beyond calculation: besides two billion dollars invested in slaves, the South lost values of every kind, totalling at least two billion more. So universal was the loss and desolation that "the whole land lay in utter paralysis and ruin."\(^{11}\) There was hardly a single bank still in operation in the South, and money, with the exception of the now worthless Confederate currency, was alarmingly absent: "There is no money of consequence in the country. We have nothing to spare that will bring money except a little wool which is good to bring it."\(^{12}\)

Poverty and distress were greatest in the wake of the Northern armies: in May, 1865, between twenty-five and fifty thousand persons in ten Georgia counties were in utter destitution. "Women and children walked distances of ten and even

\(^{10}\)F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, \textit{South Carolina During Reconstruction}, p. 10.


\(^{12}\)H. S. Moore to Charles Moore, August 16, 1865. MS letter in State Historical Collection.
forty miles to get enough corn and bacon to sustain life. The roads by day and by night were filled with hungry refu-
gees." During the week ending June 10, 45,000 pounds of meat, the same amount of meal, and 10,000 pounds of flour were issued to the poor in Atlanta --- and not a fourth of the needy persons could be supplied!

Sherman himself estimated the damage done to the State of Georgia and its military resources at $100,000,000, of which $80,000,000 was "simply waste and destruction." The cotton with which debts might be paid, had been confiscated, and there was no other means; many Southerners had lost everything but their honor, and some lost even that in the reconstruction maelstrom. Virginia's great system of public works, once the pride of the state, was in utter ruin: the canal "lay a great gash across the heart of the Commonwealth," and the railroads had become "mere streaks of rust."

Carl Schurz describes the depredations of the Northern armies as he saw them in South Carolina in July of 1865:

The track of Sherman's march in South Carolina, at least, looked for many miles like a broad, black streak of ruin and desolation --- the fences all gone; lonesome smoke stacks, surrounded by dark heaps of ashes and cinders, marking the spot where human habitation had stood; the fences along the roads wildly overgrown by weeds....

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13 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War, I, p. 66.
14 Emory Q. Hawk, op. cit., p. 426.
15 Ibid., p. 427.
Five years after Appomattox an English traveler, Robert Somers, described "the trail of war" in the Tennessee Valley:

It consists for the most part of plantations in a state of semi-ruin and plantations of which the ruin is for the present total and complete.... The trail of war is visible throughout the valley in burnt-up gin-houses, riddled houses, ruined bridges, mills, and factories.... The roads, long neglected, are in disorder, and having in many places become impassable, new tracks have been made through the woods and fields without much respect to boundaries.17

As a consequence of these widespread evidences of desolation, food was expensive and scarce; thousands of Southern men had "hard scratching to keep their folks in bread."18 The general morale of many persons was lowered and in some cases completely broken. Numbers of men lay around home stealing from their more fortunate neighbors the means of subsistence, clothing, and household goods; so prevalent was the custom in some communities that people, while fearing incendiaries and robbers, came to expect periodic thefts and to decry the conditions that engendered demoralization: "Our country has come to a pretty pass!"19

Some regions of the South were described as "perfect nests of robbers;" this could be said mainly of districts where no crops could be raised because of the lack of horses

17Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 4.
18J. M. Dixon to Charles Moore, undated. MS letter in State Historical Collection.
19Ibid., January 17, 1865.
to plow and of fences to keep off the stock. "Deplorable conditions" were universal.20

Poverty was prolonged and made more acute by the absence of transportation facilities; horses, mules, wagons, carriages were scarce; country roads were nearly impassable; bridges were everywhere dilapidated, burned, or washed away; steamboats were rarities on the rivers; postal facilities, poor enough in the Confederacy, were entirely lacking for several months after the surrender of the Southern armies.21 Railroads were without rolling stock, ties, tracks, locomotives, or money.22 Thinking it a happy joke, Northern soldiers had torn away the railroad irons, heated them, and wound them around telegraph poles and trees for mere pastime. On other occasions they might fuse a dozen rails together at the center by heating them in an immense bonfire.23

Everywhere a disorganized society rested upon a devastated land.24

Industries were completely paralyzed, and factories were demolished by the Federal raiders, or in some cases seized, sold, or dismantled because they had provided supplies for the Confederates. Almost all public buildings

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20 Captain C. C. Allen to C. B. Moore, February 23, 1864. MS letter in State Historical Collection.


22 W. B. Hesseltine, A History of the South, pp. 577-578.

23 Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, p. 215.

that had been used for war purposes were either destroyed or
confiscated for the use of the army, or else were converted
into schools for the freedmen. It was months before court-
houses, capitolb, school and college buildings were availa-
ble for normal use.

Many of the most wealthy and prosperous communities had
been reduced to desolation, decay, ruin, and beggary; not
infrequently were the stately mansions closed or fallen into
disuse. Filth, rubbish, and refuse were everywhere.25 Houses
of the most aristocratic planters were almost totally de-
nuded of furniture. In some sections women and children who
had been accustomed to luxury, begged from door to door.26

Such discouraging spectacles as these met the eye of the
Confederate soldier as he made his way into the deep South
after the war.

The Southern soldiers went home bowed down by the
mortification of defeat, ragged, emaciated, and foot-
sore, to find their homes, maybe, in ruins, their family
on the edge of starvation, their country partly devastated
and all fearfully impoverished, their people painfully
wrestling with the bewildering problem of providing
for the coming day.27

Although the pinch of poverty was felt everywhere, some
were far more fortunate than others in that they had suffi-
cient food while others were starving or begging:

26Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 46.
27Carl Schurz, op. cit., III, p. 140.
At present we use light bread Irish potatoes beans peas cabbages tomatoes & peaches also molasses all pretty plenty will have a fine crop of molasses & a respectable one of sweet potatoes & will have 2 bushel of oats in a few days which costs us $2\frac{1}{2}$ a bushel. We take Homoeopathic doses of bacon daily & thus far are ahead of many others in this country.\textsuperscript{28}

In the autumn Mr. Moore was writing:

\ldots we are now living mostly on bread mush molasses & potatoes & water we killed a mutton but it will soon be gone & we must do the best we can till hog killing time we have 6 nice hogs in the pen fat enough to eat now but it wont do to begin on them yet we have no milk & not much hopes of any soon unless the marshall law scares off some more of the bad ones for nobody that is going to stay has a cow to spare.\ldots\textsuperscript{29}

But thirteen days later he was writing that he had "heard of a cow yesterday for sale and the probability is that we will have milk here in less than a week having the means to pay."

A young lady returning home from college in a carriage because the railroads were demolished, spent the nights at plantation houses along the way, and found "only corn bread and sassafras tea at one place; no servants to render attention; silver gone; family portraits punctured by bullets; furniture and mirrors broken."\textsuperscript{30} When she reached home, the scene was repeated: of all the servants formerly kept by the family, only one old "mammy" remained faithful; the others

\textsuperscript{28}H. S. Moore to Charles Moore, August 16, 1865. MS letter in State Historical Collection.
\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, November 13, 1865.
\textsuperscript{30}Myrta L. Avary, \textit{Dixie After the War}, p. 161.
had left surreptitiously for the city to enjoy their freedom.

On September 11, 1861, George Moore had written to Charles Moore from Collin County, Texas:

... times or tolerable hard.... suthering confedersez cofey that is barley for cofey & ather groserys or all out and now chance to get any thing till red river gets up & the prospect is very dull for the river to get up.31

If this was true in 1861, at the beginning of the civil conflict, how much more desperate conditions must have been after the guns were cooled and the bayonets stacked away!

The South was in a sad dilemma: faced with the gigantic task of rebuilding a civilization, she had little save her land, now depreciated in value and productiveness, with which to begin. Yet she, utilizing her poor land and her valiant spirit, would, at long last, build order from chaos. But many bitter days were to pass before the South would be regenerated.

DESOLATION OF THE CITIES

Not only in the country had the beast of war breathed desolation and ruin, for cities, too, were blackened, strewn with debris, splintered by shells, left almost uninhabited by the citizens who had once dwelt there --- mere spectral shells of human habitation, ghost towns, shadows of the past!

Of these semi-deserted towns the Negro seemed to be proprietor; he made his living by pillaging among the ruins, and spent

31MS letter in State Historical Collection.
his time in waiting for the government to maintain him in his new-found freedom.

In city and town, as well as in country, "blackened chimneys stood sentinel over cold ash heaps which once were houses."32 The assessed valuation of property for the South as a whole declined from 30% to 60% in the decade following 1860,33 and the cities contributed a fair share of this decrease.

At Harper's Ferry, where the first fratricidal blood had been shed,

War has changed all. Freshets tear down the center of the streets, and the dreary hill-sides present only ragged growths of weeds. The town itself lies half in ruins. The government works were duly destroyed by the Rebels; of the extensive buildings which comprised the armory, rolling-mills, foundry, and machine-shops, you see but little more than the burnt-out, empty shells. Of the bridge across the Shenandoah only the ruined piers are left; still less remains of the old bridge across the Potomac. And all about the town are rubbish, filth, and stench.34

At Mobile business was stagnant; Chattanooga and Nashville were ruined; Atlanta's industrial section was in ashes. Charleston, one of the hardest-hit Southern cities, was "a city of ruins, of desolation, of vacant houses, of widowed women, of rotten wharves, of deserted warehouses, of weed-wild gardens, of miles of grass-grown streets, of acres of

33 Ibid., p. 573.
34 J. T. Trowbridge, The South, p. 66.
pitiful and voiceful barrenness."35 Shops were closed and shutters were drawn in business houses and in homes. There was no shipping in the harbor; cows grazed peacefully on vacant lots with no one to care for them; rank grass had sprung up between the paving-stones of the streets. The burned district looked "like a vast graveyard with broken walls and tall blackened chimneys."36

In families once opulent, "women, with eyes swimming in tears, were silently suffering the greatest miseries. Without food, without medicines, without servants, their condition called for the sympathy of the world."37 Gideon Welles, on a visit to Charleston, found that "luxury, refinement, happiness have fled from Charleston and poverty is enthroned there."38 A third of the city had been destroyed by a mysterious fire, and the poverty of the town and of its citizens precluded any thought of immediate rebuilding of the razed section.39

The destruction of Columbia, the capital city of South Carolina, was believed to be the crowning act of vandalism on the part of Sherman's men. The sun, on the morning after the army had pillaged and burned the town,

35W. B. Hesseltine, A History of the South, p. 574.
36Carl Schurz, op. cit., II, p. 164.
37Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, p. 65.
38Diary, II, p. 315.
dawned upon a city of ruins.... Nothing remained but the tall, spectre-looking chimneys. The noble-looking trees which shaded the streets, the flower gardens that graced them, were blasted and withered by fire. The streets were filled with rubbish, broken furniture, and groups of crouching, desponding, weeping women and children.40

Two-thirds of the town --- eighty-four of its one hundred twenty-four blocks --- was in ashes. The fire had claimed four hundred forty-five stores, the old State House, eleven banks, six churches; and every house except the buildings of the State College was pillaged.41

Truly, the little South Carolina capital was in a "sorry state of debilitation."42 Pigs grunted in the unpaved streets and rooted about in the ruins of flame-gutted buildings. The town teemed with Negroes in from the country plantations to enjoy their freedom; they lived in the deserted houses, or built tiny one-room log or tin cabins with wooden shutters and mud chimneys. Lolling in the shade or strolling in the sunny streets, many were clothed in gunny sacks, whereas some of the children were stark naked. In the fashionable residential section of the fallen society, the fine houses were strangely silent. A mass of ruins, only the majestic columns of Wade Hampton's "hall of hospitality" remained. Prostration was real and complete. The intellectuals of the college faculty, in rags, were supplied with underclothing

40F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 5.  
41Ibid., p. 5.  
42Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 348.
by a benevolent society of women. In Columbia in June of 1865, 10,000 persons were being fed daily by the government. "They crowded around the ration house, clinging to its porches, waiting for the doors to open."  

An elderly Columbia gentleman succeeded in saving his estate from the conflagration, but lost everything else. In one part of the grounds were a greenhouse and horticultural gardens where he had pursued his hobby of growing rare flowers. Now, with a cheerful assiduity that gilded his misfortunes, he turned his hobby into a business and grew flowers for sale.

Near Columbia, one of the largest estates was completely devastated, the slaves were gone, the family was gone. A single son of the distinguished house remained, and he made his living by peddling tea by the pound and molasses by the quart, on the corner of the old homestead, to the former slaves of the family.

In Richmond, an officer of the government approached a prominent citizen and demanded $600, or else the property holder would suffer confiscation. The man refused because he knew that the threat could not be executed, but many others throughout the South were not so wise; and even widows and orphans were thus impoverished far beyond the pinched condi-

43 Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 46.
44 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit, I, p. 66.
45 James S. Pike, The Prostrate State, p. 118.
46 Ibid., p. 119.
tion in which the war had left them. Some sold the remnants of their furniture, their beds, parts of their scanty raiment, and even the "coverlid off the baby's bed," to satisfy the spurious claims of men who took advantage of conditions to misuse their authority. 47

Village loafers kept the lazy towns, an week-days, from having the appearance of utter abandonment; sitting about the courthouse, on the merchants' counters, in the shade in front of the shops, they were living evidence of the disruption of Southern civilization. A contemptuous observer remarked:

In front of stores and groggeries on benches were invariably to be seen lounging many inferior specimens of humanity smoking clay pipes with long reed stems, squirting tobacco juice, whittling pine sticks, and "spinning yarns." 48

Few stocks of merchandise remained in the South when the war ended, and Northern creditors had lost so heavily through the failure of Southern merchants that they were cautious about extending credit again. Long before 1865 all the coin had been sent out of the South in contraband trade through the blockades. 49

Some cities made brave attempts to restore something of the old business prosperity, but the enterprises rested

47 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 139.
49 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 5.
almost wholly upon business speculators from the North; for the natives were without money, the banks were closed and ruined, and the insurance companies had failed. The only hope for the restoration of the cities was the resumption of normal activities in the country --- the cultivation of the vast plantations as of old.  

As speedily as this occurred, the South recovered.

The Southerners proved themselves adepts at devising ways of making the best of their sad situation; they invented innovations to tide them over the period of their penury, and laughed at their ingenious makeshifts. Thus it was that a Southern lady could pen in her diary: "Window-panes patched with paper are all the fashion in this town."  

**MEN, DEFEATED BUT MILITANT**

The soldier, returning to his dismantled home, saw starvation standing at his door, shaking his gaunt finger at wife and little ones. Soon a worse sight met his gaze: an idle, shiftless mass of freedmen hung around the courthouse, the post office, and other public places, wondering when they could crowd the soldier's family out of their home, and move into it. Some of the slaves were still faithful and respectful; many were sullen, suspicious, grum; some insolent. Many looked on with maudlin curiosity and with ill-suppressed delight as they saw the gentlemen of the South hoeing their gardens, ploughing the fields, driving their own ox-carts, or hiring themselves to some neighbor that could manage to give them three meals a day and a few dollars a month to work as laborers. 

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50 Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 46.
51 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 149.
52 John L. Hall, op. cit., p. 268.
A long, thin line of gray-garbed men, "ragged, half-starved, heavy-hearted, enfeebled by want and wounds, having fought to exhaustion," \(^5\) staggered from weakness into the towns, often finding themselves almost too weak to stand, and the towns where they had hoped for better fare, gutted with the flames of soldiers and incendiaries. "Penniless, sick at heart and in body, and humiliated by defeat, they found their families in poverty and despair. 'A degree of destitution that would draw pity from a stone,' wrote a Northern correspondent."\(^5\) Too many times, after undergoing all the dangers, privations, and hardships of war and of the long journey home, they found only piles of ashes where had stood their humble cottage or stately mansion. At Appomattox they had "stacked their arms, folded their colors and walked away empty-handed to find their distant blighted homes"\(^5\) in a barren land.

They straggled back to communities that were far from being satisfactory dwelling places for civilized people. Many of their neighbors and members of their immediate families were gone; their property was despoiled; the labor system was disorganized; and want and suffering stalked abroad through all the land. The whites were demoralized and sometimes divided among themselves; the Negroes were free, be-

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\(^5\) Henry W. Grady, *The New South*, p. 27.


wilder, and disorderly, for government had lapsed and law had been suspended with the fall of the Confederacy.56

"Confronted on every hand by desolation and decay, the people in the summer of 1865 wearily began the task of salvaging what was left of their once proud civilization."57 The entire social system, "feudal in its magnificence,"58 had been swept away in the storms of war, and the people of the South were without law or legal status; crushed by defeat, their very traditions were gone. And in the midst of their sad plight, they were faced by the greatest problem that ever confronted American intelligence --- the establishment of a status for four million liberated slaves.

Having fought and starved their fill, the Confederate soldiers returned home to seek a chance to make meat and bread and raiment for themselves and for those dependent upon them. They had fought and lost, and now they had no time for repining over lost causes or forging new issues for fresh quarrels.59 "Anything for an honest living,"60 was now their desire. Officers high in the Confederate service were seen selling to the Federals pies and cakes cooked by their wives; likewise they sold fish and oysters that they themselves had

56 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 2.
57 Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 154.
59 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 68.
60 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 355.
caught. And men and women, many of them among the old aristocracy, did not shrink from hitching themselves to their plows when they had no horse or mule. Many an aristocrat, who in April had ruled a veteran regiment, in July was hunting desperately for a mule, that he might plow an acre or two to raise food wherewith to keep his delicately nurtured family from starvation. For famine followed in the wake of devastation in most sections of the South, and suffering beyond reckoning was found on every hand. Rich planters' families lived on corn bread when they could get it; and when they could not, they resorted to "cow-peas," a coarse cattle fodder.

Southern civilization had come tumbling down as a consequence of the war; all culture was disrupted. Hence the Southern white man was faced with the stupendous problem of reconstructing the South's whole economic and social order that had been demolished in the cataclysm. South of the Ohio and the Potomac the ex-Confederates sought to adjust themselves to the new conditions, to solve the social and economic questions resulting from emancipation, to re-create a political society through which they might regain power in the councils of the nation, and to preserve a few remaining remnants of the old way of life from the devastating onslaughts.

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61 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 16.
63 James S. Pike, op. cit., p. 117.
of "Yankee" ideas and ideals.  

People set to work with a well-defined optimism; with obstinate will they set out to rebuild. They kept their pluck up; laughed at their poverty instead of howled. And their poverty was very real, as the following statement by General Boynton indicates:

Window-glass has given way to thin boards, in railway coaches and in the cities. Furniture is marred and broken, and none has been replaced for four years. Dishes are cemented in various styles, and half the pitchers have tin handles. A complete set of crockery is never seen, and in very few families is there enough to set a table.... A set of forks with whole tines is a curiosity. Clocks and watches have nearly all stopped. ... Hair brushes and tooth brushes have all worn out; combs are broken.... Pins, needles, and thread, and a thousand such articles, which seem indispensable to housekeeping, are very scarce. Even in weaving on the looms, corncobs have been substituted for spindles. Few have pocket knives. In fact, everything that has heretofore been an article of sale at the South is wanting now. At the tables of those who were once esteemed luxurious providers you will find neither tea, coffee, sugar, nor spices of any kind. Even candles, in some cases, have been replaced by a cup of grease in which a piece of cloth is plunged for a wick.

Carpets were in tatters, or had been removed to make army blankets. Those pianos that had escaped the axe, jangled, for they had not been tuned for five years. Windows were uncurtained --- the draperies had been made into clothing. Many ate from gourds, and pins and needles were so scarce that they were handed about among the community and re-

65F. E. Skimmings and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 22.
turned. In many homes earthen mugs took the place of glasses; sometimes these crude mugs were hand-made from local clays. In hotels, guests had to take their turn at using the few remaining chairs.

The people dressed "in styles enough to drive a tailor crazy." Ancient and discarded garments were resurrected. When ladies' bonnets could no longer be made over, they plaited native straw, devised hats from the braid, and trimmed them with rosettes of corn shucks. Their shoes, made by plantation cobblers from roughly tanned hides, were coarse and large. The Yankees criticized the Confederates for wearing their uniforms after the war was over, but they wore them not from pride but from necessity: they had no other clothes, and no means wherewith to purchase others. Mistaking the motives of the Confederates for wearing their uniforms, the Federal officers issued their infamous "button orders," prohibiting the wearing of Confederate buttons or any other type of insignia. At first, the Southern men paid no attention to the order, for they had no other buttons. Hence, because they appeared in public wearing their buttons, they were fined or else had the buttons cut off by Federal officers or by saucy Negroes who sheared them off with a sabre, or else marched them off through the streets to the provost to answer for the crime of violating the button order. All sorts of makeshifts

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67 Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, p. 226.
68 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, pp. 61-62.
for buttons were inaugurated, but thorns were the chief means of holding the clothing together. Finally, when the Federals perceived the plight of the Southerners, they were permitted to cover the buttons so as to conceal the insignia; and next morning hundreds of Confederates appeared with buttons covered in black --- for mourning.⁶⁹

The following sentence, taken from a letter from H. S. Moore to Charles Moore, November 13, 1865, is typical of the doings of people in an era when such common articles as buttons and thread were precious: "Joes things that he left here are all right except his thread and some buttons that he left I made use of them & I expect to make that right when I see him...."⁷⁰

During these days, almost all communicants at the Sunday services in the churches were in mourning, but, holding back their tears, they turned bravely to the work at hand and to soothing the spirits of their men. Within two weeks of the surrender, travelers were amazed to see young people of various localities in the South gaily celebrating May Day amid the smoking ruins; and in midsummer a young girl wrote in her diary, "we are trying to help our soldiers forget, and are having picnics and parties all the time." "Starvation parties," at which no refreshments were served, were very popular. At picnics, the young people danced to old melodies played on

⁷⁰MS letter in State Historical Collection.
fiddles and banjos. Soon they returned to an innovation of the old-fashioned tournament for amusement: riders, for the glory of their ladies, rode by rapidly, collecting on the end of hickory lances rings suspended on posts. Thus there were fun, jollity, and billing and cooing even among the smoldering ruins and among the graves.71

Even though destitute, sad, and vanquished, the people of the South seem to have showed few signs of discouragement at the disheartening picture which they were compelled to face upon the return of peace, but plunged into the work of reconstruction with the same confidence and enthusiasm with which they took up arms in the great contest which was destined to inflict incalculable ruin and misery upon them.72

The old Southern civilization had been fallacious in that it clung to the idea that labor is a curse and is to be shirked on to somebody else already so low in the social scale that work will not degrade him further. But defeat and impoverishment brought labor as a necessity to every one, and slowly it was revealed as a blessing to the South. The horses brought back from the army were transformed from chargers into plow-horses, much to the safety and gain of the people. And the masters who had been fighters became toilers — "and if it seemed a fall it proved a rise."73

Andrews, astounded at the Southern attitude toward labor,

71 Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 54.
72 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 146.
concluded that idleness seemed to be the normal state. It was the boast of both men and women that they had never done an hour's work in their lives — "the public mind is thoroughly debauched, and the general conscience is lifeless as the grave." He met hundreds of hale and vigorous young men who unblushingly admitted that they had not earned a penny since the war, and he concluded: "Nine-tenths of the people must be taught that labor is ... not debasing." It was pitiful enough to find so much idleness, but it was sad indeed to see that it was likely to continue indefinitely: "The war will not have borne proper fruit if our peace does not speedily bring respect for labor as well as respect for man." And, slowly through necessity, the South took on a new attitude toward labor.

Sherman, in speaking of the general desolation in the South, was reported to have said: "It would be a good thing if this sent every Southern woman to the wash-tub." Thomas Dabney, hearing of Sherman's remark, declared: "He shall never send my daughters to the wash-tub! I will do the washing myself!" And this old hero, though seventy, was the family laundry-man for two years, as long as the need lasted. He never before had done manual labor, but now he took up gardening.

74Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War*, pp. 399-400.
76Susan D. Smedes, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
When apprehensions as to the treatment that the rebellious South might expect from the victorious North were allayed, mainly through the Presidents' lenient plans of reconstruction, the Southerner set himself earnestly to the stupendous work of rehabilitation. In fact,

... the reputed indolent and helpless Sardanapalus of the South accepted his fate without unmanly murmurs, and went to work as if he had done nothing else since his infancy. His effiminate soft hand grasped the plough with more energy than had ever been done by his former slave; and the stately matron went with a serene smile to the kitchen and to the washtub.

Many women who had been social queens, who had had everything the heart could desire, and a retinue of servants eager to obey their every behest, now found themselves reduced to a harder lot than their Negroes had ever known. Yet they gratefully and graciously availed themselves of the lowliest tasks by which they might earn enough to purchase a dress for the baby, a pair of shoes for little bare feet, coffee or tea or other luxuries for an invalid dear one, or a bit of any sort of food to replenish an almost empty larder. Very few of them had ever been accustomed to any type of domestic service and consequently, in the new order of things, found themselves at a great disadvantage. Many had never cooked a meal in their lives. They had flour but they could not

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78 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 150.
make bread; cows, but they could not milk. 79

Yet, as cheerfully as they could, the women turned to the kitchen, and the men to manual labor. A philosophy of hard work and close economy was preached, and every expedient that might lead out of the morass of poverty and social stagnation suggested. When, after they had begun to see the first fruits of their labors, it was evident that a new day would bring new opportunities, and they became optimistic, predicting the development of a society affording more wealth and happiness than the one destroyed. 80

Delicate ladies could be seen in houses almost void of furniture, at work over washtubs and cook-pots, with no actual means of securing the bare necessities of life. 81 A Boston correspondent, writing home from New Orleans, said that the "false ideas prevalent throughout the South in relation to the dignity or indignity of labor had been done away with almost entirely." Planters and their sons, of great wealth before the war, were not ashamed to perform duties once considered "degrading." They plowed or hoed in the fields, worked as clerks or overseers, or earned their living as mechanical tradesmen. "Men who earlier had scores of servants at their call were hewing wood and drawing water at fifty cents per diem." Young cavaliers of Dixie, once the

79 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 123.
80 F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 22.
81 Ibid., p. 18.
delight of Saratoga and Newport ballrooms, were now "delving into mother earth with their own hands and with strong brave hearts earning their bread with the sweat of their brows." Meanwhile the women were "dabbling" their "soft white hands in the wash-tub or browning their fair faces over a cooking stove." The Southern people were developing, quite unexpectedly, a "latent force and energy," and it was making them far more "self-supporting and self-reliant" than they had ever been before.82

Representing those who early began to fathom the blessings of honest labor was Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the founder of Hampton Institute. He expressed the philosophy of this at-first-small group in the following words:

The war was the saving of the South. Defeat and ruin brought more material prosperity to the South than to the North, and the future has untold advantages in store. Education is part of it, but capital and enterprise, which make men work, are the greater part. The negro and poor white, and, more than all, the old aristocrat, are being saved by hard work, which, next to the grace of God, saves our souls.83

Yet many there were who, even though seeing the necessity of work, would not bend their pride to the point of performing manual labor. These people were highly incensed at Schurz' suggestion that they might sell part of their huge plantations. But they could not conceive of such a thing:


why, in many neighborhoods, no land had been sold for two or three generations! Thus these aristocrats, land-poor and penniless, starved to death on pride.\textsuperscript{84}

A beautiful loyalty persisted among the freedmen during the early days of their liberty. Old ex-slaves, with turkeys, game, and fruit, would slip unseen into the "big house" with an instinctive sense of delicacy and leave these viands secretly in the depleted larders of their old masters and mistresses.\textsuperscript{85}

An estimate declares that in the states of Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, in December of 1865, 500,000 whites were without the necessaries of life. Numbers were dying for lack of food, and relief agencies redoubled their efforts. The Freedmen's Bureau cared for whites as well as blacks.\textsuperscript{86}

An official of the Bureau, traveling through the desolate back-country, wrote a description of the want and poverty in one county that was applicable, at that time, to two hundred other counties --- one-third of the South:

\begin{quote}
It is a common, an every-day sight in Randolph County, that of women and children, most of whom were formerly in good circumstances, begging for bread from door to door. Meat of any kind has been a stranger to many of their mouths for months. The drought cut off what little crops they hoped to save, and they must have immediate help or perish. By far the greater suffering exists among the whites. Their scanty
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{84}Carl Schurz, \textit{op. cit.}, III, p. 161.

\textsuperscript{85}Susan D. Smedes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 246.

\textsuperscript{86}Walter L. Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 14.
supplies have been exhausted, and now they look to the
government alone for support. Some are without homes
of any description.87

All losses incurred by the South were enormously signi-
ficant, but the effects of the abolition of slavery were more
immediately disastrous, for they implied not only the loss
of taxable property and of the slaves themselves, and a dis-
arrangement of the labor system based upon slavery, but in many
instances the breaking up of the old estates.88

The farmers and planters found themselves "land-poor."
The soil remained, but everywhere was a prevalent lack of
labor, of agricultural equipment, of farm stock, of seeds,
of money to carry on and to work the work of restoration.
The result was that a man owning hundreds of acres might be
as poor as a Negro refugee.89

Because necessity demanded it, some planters threw their
land on the market at low prices --- three to five dollars for
land worth fifty. The poorer lands could not be sold at all,
and thousands of these marginal and semi-marginal farms were
deserted by their owners. Everywhere, largely because of the
lack of capital and of the instability of the labor supply,
recovery from the agricultural depression was slow.90

88Emory Q. Hawk, op. cit., p. 429.
89Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 3.
90Ibid., p. 4.
Mainly by means of promissory notes many poor whites and a few ex-slaves got possession of pieces of land that were either sold by the large plantation owners or foreclosed to satisfy mortgages, and established themselves in the old plantation-minded South as independent farmers. Thus a new element was slowly entering the social and economic fabric of the region.\textsuperscript{91} Large estates, lack of capital, and an unreliable labor supply were incompatible elements that were instrumental in disrupting the old economic and social system under the old regime when the South had been powerful, and in erecting in their stead a simpler, more democratic civilization which recognized the Negro as a freedman whose liberty was somewhat curtailed.

Distressed planters, feeling that Northern migrations into the South seemed to offer salvation, offered their lands for sale or took Northern partners, because they needed the capital and because they thought the Negroes might work for men from the North.\textsuperscript{92}

In the collapse that followed the war the poor were stripped as well as the rich; the little they had possessed had been their all, and to lose it was to lose all. And added to this actual loss was a grievous disappointment, for they had sold butter for $50 a pound and chickens for $60 a pair, in Confederate notes, and had felt that they surely

\textsuperscript{91}Emory Q. Hawk, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 430.

\textsuperscript{92}W. B. Hesseltine, \textit{A History of the South}, p. 579.
would come out rich in the end. Hence, "great was their dis-
may and their astonishment when they found they had leaned on
a broken reed, and their visions of sudden wealth had vanished
in an instant."93

Among the professions, conditions were as unfavorable as
on the farms: courts were open only to lawyers who would
take an oath that they had not willingly aided the Confederacy;
physicians had plenty of work, but no remuneration; schools
were closed, and the teachers were scattered.94

The war both gave and took away. The direct ca-
tastrophe it visited upon the Southern people was to
rob them of their confidence in themselves. The burned
towns would be rebuilt, the railroads would once more
be laid down, the devastated fields would sometime
yield again. Even the grief for the heroic dead would
in time become a memory that did not burn. But the
spirit of the South was broken, perhaps beyond repair;
its faith in itself destroyed, it may be beyond all
hope of resurrection. Yet the war brought its gift to
the South. The antagonisms of the war were soon for-
gotten; the remembrance of suffering and high endeavor
endured as a heritage. In this memory the South was
united, its people became more Southern. The spirit of
Southern nationalism was increased by the war it brought
to pass, grew immeasurably from the war which denied it.95

Thus the desolation and penury of the South was a bless-
ing in disguise to those who experienced post-war hardships,
and to those of other generations who live and have lived
in the "new South" that, engendered by privation, has succeeded

93 James S. Pike, op. cit., p. 119.
95 R. S. Cotterill, op. cit., p. 331.
the old.

The South was not everywhere desolated or completely impoverished, although every section suffered more or less from the depredations and enforced economies of war. Physical devastation of land and property was greatest in those regions that had seen the invasion of Northern armies, and was relatively unknown in other areas, for only on very rare occasions did Southerners lay waste their own country --- usually to prevent seizure and desecration by the enemy.

Evolving from the singular disorganization of old economic practices --- practices that had their root in slavery and in the attendant relationships of exploiter and exploited --- was a serious demoralization of labor and capital. In some sections almost all capital had been destroyed, and the laboring forces of the plantation belt had been liberated and released from the routine of gratuitous involuntary servitude. Extreme difficulty was met in establishing an equitable adjustment between employers without sufficient capital and free laborers without obligation to work.

The freedmen, leaving the plantations to experience the doubtful joys of freedom, often made it mandatory upon the planters and their families to work or else suffer even greater hardships than those already encountered. At first, until necessity broke their pride, many refused to work for fear of degrading themselves; but others, perhaps a majority, went to work to rebuild the desolation wherever it existed and everywhere to recoup the family fortune. Faced with labor difficulties, the
planter aristocracy was placed at a disadvantage when compared with the "poor whites." The latter, too, had suffered along with the plantation owners where desolation was prevalent; but they could set to work after the war without being confronted with the difficulty of overcoming a mental aversion toward labor. "Poor whites" had always been laborers, mentally or manually, and one accustomed to labor does not often stigmatize the tasks that he must perform. Their lot in the new order was not to be different from that in the old.

Of all the significant outgrowths of reconstruction, the most far-reaching in importance in Southern society has been the development, inaugurated by grave necessity, of a wholesome attitude toward labor on the part of the upper classes. Slaves were gone, but labor had to be performed to combat hunger and physical discomforts; hence the majority of the aristocratic whites, choosing the lesser of the two evils of labor or of death from starvation, chose to become laborers. And, becoming laborers themselves, their philosophy of labor underwent transformation -- a change that has sent the whole South, permeated by the new attitude, progressively onward since the days of reconstruction.

Desolation made labor essential for many Southern aristocrats. Misfortune led to the discovery that labor is the surest route to accomplishment. Hence it follows that the present progressive South is the child of the desolated South.
CHAPTER III
SOCIAL DISRUPTION AND CHAOS

Two paramount questions were involved in the problem of reconstruction in the South: how to provide the necessities of life for the impoverished population, and how to establish a civilized existence through the constitution of governments adequate for the changed social needs. "For in none of the rebel states did the war leave either an economic organization that could carry on the ordinary operations of production, or a political organization that could hold society together." ¹

In view of the fact that "the social discipline of the community was disrupted by the destruction of slavery," ² the entire social order was at the edge of chaos. ³ In fact, in all the length and breadth of the ravaged territory of the old Confederacy, the ancient social structure lay in "obvious and irremediable ruin." ⁴

Reconstruction had an unfortunate beginning, for its policies were inaugurated among a people possessing a heritage of economic chaos from the war and from the resulting emancipation of their slaves. ⁵ Under such circumstances, it

¹William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, p. 10.
³Julia E. Johnsen, Ku Klux Klan, p. 103.
⁴William A. Dunning, ibid., p. 4.
⁵The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, p. 390.
is not surprising that reconstruction, as finally framed by an unsympathetic Congress, was not a political, social, or economic success.

The war had left the South in utter chaos: the old planter families who had so long ruled the South and even the nation, were ruined; their wealth was gone, their lands ravished, their slaves freed --- "a dark mass, bewildered and irresponsible, scattered over the land, or controlled in some measure by the Freedmen's Bureau."6 The Confederate soldiers returned to their homes with little immediate prospect of rebuilding them; and after Appomattox, the masses of Confederate soldiery had neither homes nor work. Unemployment, desolation, and want bred social unrest and confusion.

THE BLACKS' PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM

After the Civil War the slavery problem was supplanted by the race problem; four million freed blacks in a total population of over nine millions kept the Southern mind concentrated on the race question,7 for the Negroes, embarking on their new course, found "the world turned upside down with themselves proclaimed to be on top."8

When the war was over, the Negro knew himself for a free man --- Northern agitators had seen to that; and the Southern

6Maurice S. Evans, op. cit., p. 49.
7James T. Adams, op. cit., p. 393.
8Ibid., p. 391.
white found himself faced with the problem of dealing with the Negro as a free laborer --- a situation entirely bewildering to most ex-slaveholders, for they could not at first comprehend the fact their slaves were actually free.\(^9\) It was a hopeless enigma to many Southerners that the Negroes no longer belonged to any one: "They had to belong to somebody. It was out of decency and humanity that they should have nobody to belong to!"\(^10\)

Even though a freedman, the Negro after the war had no protection; he was whipped the same as before, and sometimes his head was split with an axe for "sassing;" he was cheated out of his possessions --- all because the mass of Southerners could not conceive of him outside of bondage.\(^11\)

Col. Samuel Thomas, assistant commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau for Mississippi, told Carl Schurz that,

The whites esteem the blacks their property by natural right, and however much they may admit that the relations of masters and slaves have been destroyed by the war and by the President's emancipation proclamation, they still have an ingrained feeling that the blacks at large belong to the whites at large, and whenever opportunity serves, they treat the colored people just as their profit, caprice, or passion may dictate.\(^12\)

And their attitude was not wholly unjustified or un-

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\(^9\)Carl Schurz, op. cit., III, p. 169.  
\(^10\)Myra L. Avary, op. cit., p. 152.  
\(^12\)Carl Schurz, op. cit., III, p. 189.
natural, since the South felt, in general, that what remained of its civilization was doomed to be submerged in the "black cloud" of freed Negroes that threatened inundation. For, as Du Bois maintains,

Any human being, "doomed in his own person, and his posterity, to live without knowledge, and without the capacity to make anything his own, and to toil that another may reap the fruits," is bound, on sudden emancipation, to loom like a great dread on the horizon.13

Four distinct classes of freedmen might be identified in any Southern community after emancipation: (1) those who recognized the necessity of labor, and therefore went about it cheerfully and with forethought; (2) those comprehending the necessity of labor, but requiring considerable encouragement to follow it steadily; (3) those who preferred idleness, yet were not altogether averse to doing dull job work about plantation or city; and (4) those who avoided labor as much as possible, living by voluntary charity, persistent begging, or systematic pilfering.14

"When freedom cried out," was a phrase much used by the Negroes in referring to emancipation.15 They were unable to comprehend the full significance of liberty from bondage. The liberated blacks, "bewildered and gasping,... wandered or waited."16

14 Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, pp. 398-399.
15 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 35.
16 Maurice S. Evans, op. cit., p. 50.
With the Confederate surrender, the Federal post commanders issued proclamations declaring the slaves free and admonishing their former masters to treat them accordingly. The freedmen were advised in the proclamations to remain at home --- advice which in general was disregarded, and they congregated in the larger towns in such numbers that in some places they were ordered back to the plantations by military force.\textsuperscript{17}

Large numbers of the freedmen flocked to the towns as a practical test of their freedom, often leaving secretly in the night; but with the first taste of freedom over, and the first pinch of want experienced, thousands of them came straggling back to the plantations with a certain shamefacedness, to be received with cordiality.\textsuperscript{18}

Those remaining on the plantations after 1865 did not take kindly to white supervision; they objected to overseers, drivers, and plantation bells as remnants of slavery days. If they felt inclined, they left the plantation and never returned, for such a simple thing as a written labor contract gave them no concern whatever. At times the Negroes, under any offers or cajolery, could not be induced to work. They were free! And what if they did not make a crop? The Freedmen's Bureau would feed and clothe them.\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[19] Emory Q. Hawk, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 429.
\end{footnotes}
Immediately after the war the planters borrowed what capital they could and experimented with hired labor; but in spite of the high prices of cotton, its cultivation on large plantations was unprofitable because of the debts that had to be incurred, the heavy burden of taxation under "carpet-bag" rule, and the lack of a dependable supply of labor.20

In many cases, as their former masters eked out a precarious existence from the wreck of their farms and plantations, the ex-slaves wasted away in idleness, want, and disease. For,

As the full meaning of this news (of emancipation) was grasped by the freedmen, great numbers of them abandoned their old homes, and regardless of crops to be cultivated, stock to be cared for, or food to be provided, gave themselves up to testing their freedom. They wandered aimless but happy through the country, found endless delight in hanging about the towns and Union camps, and were fascinated by the pursuit of the white man's culture in the schools which optimistic northern philanthropy was establishing wherever it was possible.21

At all hours of the day the liberated slaves could be seen laying down their implements and "sauntering singing from the fields."22 And each morning dawned upon many empty cabins whose occupants had departed during the night. "They welcomed freedom with a cry. They fled to the friends that had freed them. The shrank from the master who still strove

20Emory Q. Hawk, op. cit., p. 429.
21William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, p. 11.
for their chains." Nevertheless, the freedman harbored little of vengeance toward his old master; perhaps "no race or class of men ever passed from slavery to freedom with a record equally pure of revenge." Whereas some tried their freedom and ran away for a frolic, others left because of ill treatment, but these latter cases are thought to have been comparatively rare. In some parts of the South, the "high-roads and by-ways were alive with foot-loose colored people."  

The status and temperament of Negroes under their newfound freedom was apparently unchanged in some cases, though generalizations are difficult. Often the freedman worked the crops as before, obediently referring to his former owner as "master," and, upon being told that he might leave if he wished, the "universal answer" on many plantations was that he would stay. Sometimes the news of freedom was received with sadness and concern, as in the case of the ex-slave woman who repined: "I have no master to feed and clothe Nancy now. She will have to look out for herself and for the rainy day."

Countless well-disposed masters were pleased with the attitudes exhibited by the blacks, and found them willing to work, cheerful, and evincing "good behavior ... beyond all expectations."

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26 J. G. Randall, Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 725.
Sidney Andrews, who writes from personal experience and observation, is bitter in his denunciation of the Southern whites who, confronted with the momentous problems of the post-war era, seemingly took no interest in the man who had been freed in their midst:

It is proclaimed everywhere that he will not work, that he cannot take care of himself, that he is a nuisance to society, that he lives by stealing, and that he is sure to die in a few months; and, truth to tell, the great body of the people, though one must not say, intentionally, are doing all they well can to make these assertions true. If it is not said that any considerable number wantonly abuse and outrage him, it must be said that they manifest a barbaric indifference to his fate which just as surely drives him on to destruction as open cruelty would.27

A Georgia planter, standing by helplessly while his ex-slaves walked from his fields, declared: "This war has taught us the perfect impossibility of placing the least confidence in any Negro. In too numerous instances those we have esteemed the most have been the first to desert us."28

Andrews believed that the country Negro was perhaps generally, idle, vicious, improvident, negligent, and unfit to care well for his interests. In himself, he is a hard, coarse, unlovely fact, and no amount of idealizing can make him otherwise. Yet, for all that, he is worth quite as much as the average country white.29

And this observer continued by saying that the Negro

27Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, pp. 396-397.
29Sidney Andrews, op. cit., p. 22.
was made by his master, which assertion under slavery was largely true. This explains the fact that most of the kind and well-disposed masters had difficulty in dealing with the freedmen than did those who had been more inhumane to their bondsmen.

Trowbridge, asking an intelligent colored waiter at Harper's Ferry, an ex-slave, how the colored people had behaved under freedom, received this reply:

Well, just tolerable. They were like a bird let out of a cage. You know how a bird that has been long in a cage will act when the door is opened; he makes a curious fluttering for a little while. It was just so with the colored people. They didn't know at first what to do with themselves. But they got sobered pretty soon, and they are behaving very decent now.30

Perhaps Frederick Douglass was more poetic than truthful when he attempted to fit the following characterization to all the emancipated slaves:

He had none of the conditions of self-preservation or self-protection. He was free from the individual master, but he had nothing but the dusty road under his feet. He was free from the old quarter that once gave him shelter, but a slave to the rains of summer and to the frosts of winter. He was turned loose, naked, hungry, and destitute to the open sky.31

The freedman's poverty, ignorance, and lack of a master to care for him brought misfortune in the form of disease, suffering, and death. Several estimates indicate that the

30 J. T. Trowbridge, op. cit., p. 68.
blacks lost as many persons by disease in 1865-66 as the whites had lost in the war. They crowded into unsanitary hovels, surrounded and pinched by poverty, and knew nothing of personal hygiene. In 1870, in equal populations, two colored persons died as compared with one white. Augusta was not the only place in the South where Negro mortality increased several hundred times "after freedom cried out."

The most obvious failing of the freed Negroes was the poor quality of houses that they were able to provide for themselves. Where they continued to live in the quarters, the cluster of cabins about the "big house" lost their orderly and well-kept appearance; and when the Negro built his own hovel out of logs or tin or scraps of wood and metal, his condition was pitiable indeed. He was always at the mercy of the elements, even in his leaky and poorly constructed cabins.

The blacks' expectation of "forty acres and a mule" --- what seemed to them a fortune --- fostered the native laziness and improvidence of the race. While waiting for his lot to change, the freedman was unwilling to work; wishing only to wander about, his life necessarily was partly supported by theft and pillage. For freedom meant idleness and irresponsibility. Regarding this attitude, Andrews wrote:

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33 Peter J. Hamilton, The Reconstruction Period, p. 32.
34 F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 329.
"Hundreds of conversations with negroes of every class in at least a dozen towns of central Georgia have convinced me that the race is on a large scale ignorantly sacrificing its own material good for the husks of vagabondage."35 This traveler asked a typical Negro "mammy" who had been the indulged favorite of an aristocratic family in a comfortable home, "What did you leave the old place for, Auntie?" "What fur?" she queried in astonishment: "Joy mah freedom!"

Although the freedman was shy and cautious at first in his new conditions of life,

> The removal of personal restraint, the exemption from corporal punishment, the right to use his own time, to make and receive his own money, were the privileges in which he exulted.36

All the freedmen did not celebrate their liberty by becoming boisterous and lawless; many were meek and law-abiding; and the whites who were considerate of the feelings of the Negroes were as numerous as those who lynched and whipped.37 Some adviser-agitators among the blacks assured them that politeness to the whites was a mark of servitude, so the former good manners in many cases were replaced by impudence and distrust: blacks pushed and crowded whites off the sidewalks, but, in the main, perhaps, impudent language marked the limits

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of rudeness. 38

The negro might not stand, as he formerly had stood, with his hat in his hand while the white man passed by. Possibly he would not open a gate, or make way on the sidewalk, or otherwise carry himself with that deference which earlier had marked his life. And he did fifty worse things which were not compatible with his welfare. 39

Grudgingly admitted to any of the natural rights of man, despised alike by Unionists and Secessionists, wantonly outraged by many and meanly cheated by more of the old planters, receiving a hundred cuffs for one helping hand and a thousand curses for one kindly word, they bear themselves toward their former masters very much as white men and women would under the same circumstances. True, by such deportment they unquestionably harm themselves; but consider of how little value life is from their standpoint. They grope in the darkness of this transition period, and rarely find any sure stay for the weary arm and the fainting heart. Their souls are filled with a great but vague longing for freedom; they battle blindly with fate and circumstance for the unseen and uncomprehended, and seem to find every man's hand raised against them either for blows or reproaches. What wonder that they fill the land with restlessness! 40

Serious social problems were the immediate result of the disruption of the slave system, which had served to discipline the labor force of the South. The first reaction of the freedman to emancipation was to get a gun, a dog, and perhaps a new woman for a wife to accompany him on his aimless wanderings. Around the Union camps he fell victim to the white man's vices and diseases; and coupled with the worst excesses of vice were the emotional disturbances of camp meetings and

38 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 42.
40 Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, p. 399.
religious revivals. In their zeal for equality, he formed churches of his own, separating spiritually from his old master. He became the easy victim of every salesman, and spent his last nickel on hair straighteners, skin bleachers, and red-white-and-blue striped stakes to mark off the land that the government would soon distribute. Stealing from the whites, formerly a minor offense, soon became the accepted means of sustaining life. His impudence, engendered under the tutelage of Yankees, was but the ignorant assertion of his new-found equality; but nothing could have been more irritating to the whites, for in a civilization where good manners had been "an essential attribute of cultural achievement," bad manners was a sin of the first magnitude.41

Not only were the idleness, vagabondage, thievery, impudence, and lack of dependability of the Negro alarming to the whites, but they were dangerous, almost murderous, to the welfare of the freedman himself, for they placed a stigma upon his name that the South has never forgotten and made him the servant of unwholesome practices. When he unthoughtedly left his quarters to follow after sugar-tongued breeders of contention and dissatisfaction, he immeasurably victimized himself. Samuel Chapman Armstrong of Hampton Institute saw the situation and defined it thus: "The North thinks the great thing is to free the negro from his former owner; the real thing is to save him from himself."42

41W. B. Hesseltine, A History of the South, pp. 574-575.
42George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 367.
Yet the freedman cannot be condemned, for he was wholly uneducated in the ways of freedom. The black masses of unschooled Negroes were "like sheep without a shepherd."43

THE FREEDMAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD LABOR

What Andrews wrote of South Carolina was true of the entire South for several years after emancipation: "The labor question, and not reconstruction, is the main question among intelligent thinking men of the state."44 Actually, the problem of adjusting the blacks to a useful place and function in the new Southern economy was the first that demanded solution,45 for "the total destruction of the long-established labor system of the South --- based as it had been on chattel-slavery --- led inevitably to great confusion, indeed almost to social anarchy."46

This was true largely because the slave was wholly unfitted for the freedom that was so suddenly thrust upon him; without adequate preparation or intelligent leadership he was forced to enter into a competitive economic system that he could not understand, and was thrust bodily into an organized society whose ways, he had always been taught, were

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46James G. Blaine, Twenty Years in Congress, II, p. 163.
not his ways.47 Under these unfortunate circumstances, he probably deported himself admirably.

To his simple mind slavery was synonymous with work, and freedom with idleness; he could not distinguish between labor for the benefit of others and labor that ultimately would benefit himself. Although he listened patiently to the agents of the Freedmen's Bureau as they extolled the advantages of industry, he could not comprehend the point in question: Were not these same Bureau agents, by dispensing so many good things, giving proof that it was easier to live by idleness than by hard work?48 The Negroes in general considered no man free who had to work for a living, so, to prove to the world and to themselves that they were really free, they were wary of labor.49 Even though the Freedmen's Bureau encouraged longer contracts, few of them would contract to labor for more than three months at a time, and none of them beyond January 1, 1866, when, they had been led to believe, a division of lands among the ex-slaves would be made. Living in this constant expectation, they were unsettled, uneasy, and arrogant; but when January, 1866, had come and gone and still there was no division of property, the Negroes became more willing to contract their labor and to settle down somewhat.50

49Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 110.
50Ibid., p. 52.
Numbers of the freedmen were so ignorant of the true nature and importance of their new status that they were willing to contract to work for only their food and clothing as remuneration. But for many months, until starvation threatened or the Freedmen's Bureau ceased providing or demanded that the Negroes go to work, the planters' efforts to entice their former slaves to labor for hire met with little success among the masses of the sable hordes.

Since almost all freedmen refused to contract on plantations still employing the traditional exploiting, dominating, Negro-driving overseers, most of these men were put out of employment, although some attached themselves to other plantations and changed their title to "foreman" or "superintendent." With Negroes, a name is imposing, and many would cheerfully contract under a "superintendent" or a "foreman" who would not even have entered a field with a hated overseer, who might, though he dealt now with freedmen, still be vindictive and tyrannical. If so, the Negroes quit; they had endured it under slavery because they had had no other recourse.

According to Bowers,

The Negroes would not work, the plantations could not produce. The freedmen clung to the illusion that had been planted in their minds by demagogues that the economic status of the races was to be reversed through the distribution of the land among them. This cruelly

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52 W. E. Hesseltine, A History of the South, p. 574.
false hope was being fed by private soldiers, Bureau agents, and low Northern whites circulating among the negroes on terms of social equality in the cultivation of their prospective votes. "Nothing but want will bring them to their senses," wrote one Carolinian to another. At the time, however, the negroes were warding off want by prowling the highways and byways in the night for purposes of pillage. In one week, in one town in Georgia, one hundred and fifty were arrested for theft.54

The whole South, largely because of the Yankee-implanted attitude of the Negroes toward labor, was "delivered to organized pillage of the blacks, and the whites were driven to desperation."55 Under the carpetbag regime especially, "stealing was a virtue, with decent citizens submerged and silenced," into political and social oblivion.56 Wholesale thievery was even justified in the name of religion: at night the vicinity of Negro revivals would be pillaged of vegetables and poultry on the theory that the Lord had provided.57 The amount of robbery and larceny committed by the idle freedmen was alarming. Farmers' swine were stolen for pork, cows were penned in the woods and milked, and barns and cotton houses were broken open.58 But, asserts Fleming,

It was inevitable that the conditions of negro life should undergo a revolutionary change during the reconstruction. The serious matter of looking out for himself

54Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 60.
55Charles Gayarre, op. cit., p. 481.
56Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 356.
57Ibid., p. 49.
58James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 118.
and his family and of making a living dampened the negro's cheerful spirits. Released from the discipline of slavery and often misdirected by the worst of teachers, the negro race naturally ran into excesses of petty criminality. Even under the reconstruction governments the proportion of negro to white criminals was about ten to one. Theft was frequent; arson was the accepted means of revenge upon white people; and murder became common in the brawls of the city negro quarters. The laxness of the marriage relation worked special hardship on the women and children in so many cases deserted by the head of the family. 59

Not one planter in ten believed that the labor of freed Negroes could be made profitable, and cited examples of his indolence, criminality, and shiftlessness and vice to prove their contention. 60 As a rule, the planters' natural desire to resist the introduction of free Negro labor and to save or restore as much of the old slave labor system as was possible was manifestly evident. 61 As a matter of fact, free labor was long inefficient, and its inefficiency worked havoc with the progress of the South from its ordeal of reconstruction: "The South, paralyzed by the results of the war, was prevented from a normal economic recovery by the inefficiency of the free negro labor, and by the misgovernment of the reconstructionists." 62

The South during reconstruction, and for long years thereafter, even down to the present, suffered from all the "mischiefs and ills that have ever followed the unprepared

60 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 133.
61 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 288.
62 The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, p. 11.
manumission of masses of men." Not without justification were many Southerners contending that the "abolition of slavery has been followed wherever it has been attempted by ruin and social devastation." A sudden and total overturn of a country's labor system without preparation or gradual transition, is a "tremendous revolution, a terrible wrench, well apt to confuse men's minds." That was exactly what happened in the South.

Even the development of the shares system did not improve the efficiency of the Negro laborers, many of whom worked only under the imperative force of necessity. After payday, many of them would not return to their work until their money was spent; slovenly, jealous of supervision, they were suspicious of the landlords. Every year, or oftener, the majority moved to new places. Often they neglected their own crops to work for cash for some one else. "Thriftlessness kept most of the negroes from making economic progress, while generosity to neighbors and kin kept even the industrious from accumulating." The freedmen as farmers "on their own" were often failures. Free to go where they pleased and to own firearms, they hunted and fished, attended "frolics" and protracted meetings, and were too unstable to be successful, while the

64 Ibid., p. 371.
65 Carl Schurz, op. cit., III, p. 173.
66 The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, p. 9.
grass was choking their cotton to death. Not the least of their weaknesses was the fact that they were poor managers, and spent their few pennies for trifles. Never having been faced with the necessity of providing for themselves, they possessed little sense of value or of utility.\textsuperscript{67}

Perhaps an appreciable majority of the blacks either remained on the plantations or soon went back to their old employers, but it was not at these peaceful laborers that the Southern partisans looked: they saw a considerable part of the Negroes roaming aimlessly about, or huddled about the stations where the Freedmen's Bureau doled out relief, and advanced the general belief that the Negro would not work except under compulsion.\textsuperscript{68} Three-fourths of the Southern whites subscribed to this assumption --- a cruel slander. The entire struggle between black and white was a struggle for and against compulsion; the Negro insisted, perhaps blindly, that he should be free to come and go as he pleased; the whites, that he should enjoy this liberty only at the pleasure of his employer. Apparently, the whites were unable to understand that freedom for the Negro meant the same as freedom for the whites; they readily admitted that the government had freed their slaves, but still believed that they retained the right to exercise their old control.\textsuperscript{69} Although nearly every one

\textsuperscript{67} James W. Garner, \textit{Reconstruction in Mississippi}, p. 138.

\textsuperscript{68} George S. Merriam, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 287.

\textsuperscript{69} Sidney Andrews, \textit{The South Since the War}, p. 398.
in the South told Andrews that the Negro would not work, he met enough of the "better class of planters" to convince him that the Negro would work willingly, if he was but beneficently treated, and considered a man instead of a beast of burden. Unquestionably, the black was sensitive about his freedom --- it was the only thing he had that he could call his own.

Schurz, in traveling about the South in the early reconstruction days, heard similar complaints:

The negro will not work without physical compulsion. He is lazy. He is improvident. He is inconstant. He may sometimes work a little spell to earn some money, and then stop working to spend his money in a frolic. We want steady, continuous work, work that can be depended upon. To get that out of him a negro needs physical compulsion of some sort.

The Negro's attitude toward labor was a natural outgrowth of conditions in the South:

The Civil War and reconstruction had left the old South broken, it seemed almost beyond repair; victorious Northern armies had destroyed whole sections of the countryside; railroads were run down and their equipment was antiquated; at least one-fourth of the white southern manhood had been slain; as a result of the promises of the Carpetbaggers, the laboring population --- the Negroes --- had been left recalcitrant and indisposed toward regular employment.

Largely because of the disorganized labor supply, forty

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70 Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, p. 99.
71 Carl Schurz, op. cit., III, p. 162.
years had to go by before property in the South would be as valuable as in 1860, and not until the late 'seventies were the cotton crops as large as in 1865.

Often uncomprehended by the new freedmen was the fact of six working days in each week. Railroad companies complained that they could get but three or four days' work out of the black workers who were rebuilding the roads; and officers of the Freedmen's Bureau universally concurred that plantation Negroes would not work more than five days except under compulsion. One of these men reported: "Instances in which the contract officers have been called on to go out into the country and convince the negroes that work must be done on Saturday as well as on other days are not at all rare." 73

Although slave labor was gone, Negroes were the chief reliance for labor, and throughout the South planters expected to reopen their plantations using freedmen as hired laborers, though they had serious misgivings. During 1865-66 they tried free labor, only to find that many of the former slaves had got beyond their control and would not work. Supervision was hateful to them; a vagrant degenerate life appealed to their desire for change; at best they were indolent and unintelligent. In a few years it was strikingly apparent that the old plantation system had vanished, and the substitute was far from satisfactory. Unable to hire the Negro, the planter attempted to rent him a part of the estate; and as

73 Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War*, p. 100.
the tenant was usually penniless, the landlord supplied much or all of the tools and stock, too often to see his crops deserted while his tenant rode away on one of the master's mules, filled with a new and strange independence. The census speaks audibly of the decline of the plantations as the system of labor changed: in 1860, the average farm for the United States had been 199 acres; for the South, 420 acres. In the next twenty years the national average fell from 199 to 134 acres, while in the South in all but two states, the average farm was less than half its size before the Civil War.

When starvation finally drove the ex-slaves back to their desultory labor, "the habits they had formed led to much violence and crime." A brief taste of freedom had destroyed their morale and undermined their character. It was plain that the place for the freedmen was on the old plantations, if they could be persuaded to remain, and if their old masters would treat them fairly as free laborers.

Pike found in some sections instances in which twenty or more families of ex-slaves combined and agreed to pay the owner of land a stipulated amount for the use of it during the year. Working together harmoniously, they divided harmoniously at the end of the year. One little colony was able

75 Willis M. West, op. cit., p. 556.
76 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, pp. 86-87.
to buy several hundred acres of plantation land out of its surplus savings, and the members began cultivation as individual proprietors. Believing that these "embryonic communities" had sprung naturally from the situation and resembled the old slave colonies, Pike felt that they held bright prospects of solving many of the economic, social, and race problems of the South. But unfortunately, the freedmen lacked both the inclination and the initiative to carry out the system on a large scale; and, besides, the whites were suspicious of such Negro communities.

One of the significant results of the war and of the subsequent orgy of reconstruction was that, for the first time, the Negro and the Northern white man had become able to compete with the native whites for the control of many aspects of local life in the South. In industry, however, the Negro was peculiarly handicapped, since he was not welcomed in the reopened mills and factories; and there was difficulty in finding white foremen to supervise the blacks in the rare cases where they were taken into industry. The result was that the Negro, in the main, was relegated to agriculture, to personal service, or to employment in the towns as artisans. The plantation produced more skilled artisans than freedom, for the necessity of producing goods on the plantation led to the training of Negro smiths, carpenters, cabinet-makers, and weavers. But the post-war era offered few oppor-

77 James S. Pike, op. cit., p. 278.
78 F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 3.
tunities to follow their trades, as white competition and antipathy tended to shove them from the more desirable vocations. And the Negro's willingness to work for low wages depressed the wage scale of the whites as well, and caused bitterness in this quarter.79

But despite weaknesses, ignorance, misunderstandings, and a lack of knowledge of how to use his freedom profitably in establishing for himself a sound status in the new economic order, the Negro, considering the circumstances under which he was freed and the influences brought to bear upon him directly after emancipation, bore himself admirably well:

They have behaved so well since the war that the remark is not uncommon in Georgia that no race on earth, relieved from servitude under such circumstances as they were, would have behaved so well.80

SOUTHERN WHITES IN CONFUSION

Southern whites, the natural leaders of their respective communities, were grievously confused at the turn that events had taken. Slavery, the basis of Southern civilization, had been outlawed by their conquerors, the labor supply was totally disorganized, all society was in upheaval, and they themselves were threatened with political impotence. The problem of defining one's status and that of the freedmen

The Civil War meant more than the emancipation of four million slaves, with all the perplexing problems that that liberation brought with it; it involved the overturning of the whole economic system of the South. A stroke of the pen had declared the bondmen free; but to educate these people, to train them in citizenship, and to give them a place in the new labor system, was all a problem for the wisest statesmanship and the largest and most intelligent patriotism. The Southern man, whose fortune was swept away, whose slaves were free, and whose father, son, or brother had died in battle, not unnaturally looked upon any legislation by the North as adding to his cup of humiliation. The North on the other hand was quick to interpret any effort by the white South in the readjustment of social and labor conditions as evidence of a refusal to accept in good faith the results of the war. To increase the complication and the delicacy of the situation there were sometimes present personal or other peculiar elements which seemed to contradict all the leading tendencies of the period. Some Negroes, for instance, personally attached to their masters, were unwilling to accept their freedom; and generally throughout the South the white people, who laid most of their ills at the door of the Negro, resisted violently any considerable effort toward migration on the part of the former slaves. Such were but some of the things which increased the difficulties of the problem in this era of shifting status.

Mrs. Smedes, a Southerner herself, ventured the opinion that, since slavery had been swept away, "there is not an intelligent man or woman in the South who would have it recalled, if a wish could do it." She found those who had suffered and lost most --- those reduced from a life of affluence to one of grinding poverty --- more than willing to pay the price. In reality, perhaps most of the Southerners had, before emancipation, begun to feel that slavery had

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81 Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

82 Susan D. Smedes, op. cit., p. 191.
lasted as long, probably, "as it was beneficial to the black men, and as long as the white men could stand it without losing strength; that the white man was emancipated rather than the black man."83

Regardless of attitude, felt or assumed, new methods of paying and employing labor had gradually to take shape. Nature gave encouragement to the general ruin; droughts and insects wrought havoc with the crops for the first two years after Appomattox, and want and hunger claimed the land. During the four years after peace had been declared, the Freedmen's Bureau alone distributed over 21,000,000 rations to the destitute, of which three-fourths went to Negroes.84

During the war and reconstruction epochs, a marked transition occurred in the Southern temperament toward the severe; Hospitality declined, and largely through the demands of necessity, this pleasantest side of Southern life came to an end. Affairs in the old South had never been administered on a business basis, but the new South adjusted itself to a stricter economy. The old individuality was partially lost, but class distinctions were less obvious in the more homogeneous society that rose from the ashes of the old.85

Almost as soon as the Confederate armies came straggling home, the planters began to reconstruct the old plantation

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system, but were faced with the problems of discovering some new method of getting the Negro to work. Those who could raise sufficient cash tried paying wages, but found that money in the hands of the laborers dissipated the labor supply. Apprehending the situation, the Freedmen's Bureau began advocating employment on contract, but before the Bureau had ceased to function, the planters had largely resorted to share-cropping. To raise money, the landowner pledged his crops to the merchant or banker, and on this basis loans were freely given, though at from forty to one hundred percent interest. As a result, the merchants and bankers soon owned much of the land, and fortunate planters who had made money under these adverse conditions became merchants, letting their land to "croppers", whom they forced to trade at the landlord's store. Often, at the end of the year the tenant --- a Negro or a landless white --- had to turn over his share of the crop to apply on his account at the store, and often was not permitted to move to another plantation until he had paid in full. Out of this unjust system grew the practice of "peonage," a form of virtual economic slavery that curses the South to this day.

The "cropper's" share depended upon his capital in the enterprise; if he furnished only his labor, he received a fourth; if he had his own tools and provisions, half. But in most instances he had to plant specified crops and could not produce foodstuffs to free him from dependence upon the
merchant, whose prices were usually "marked up" from fifty to one hundred percent. 86

Trowbridge found that

the masters have not yet learned how to treat their old servants under the new conditions. They cannot learn that they are no longer slaves. That is one great source of trouble. On the other hand, where the freedman receives rational, just, and kind treatment, he behaves well and works well, almost without exception. 87

Some planters brought supplies to rehabilitate their plantations, only to find that the Negroes would not contract at any wage to their former masters, who were now faced with two procedures: to run the Negroes off as trespassers, or to lease to Northern capitalists. Usually they chose the latter. But certain others were ingenious and learned the trick of turning large numbers of hogs into pastures and fields near the roads. Every freedman who passed stopped, and soon the master had his desired quota of workers. The explanation? "They all like to hire out where there is plenty of pork." 88

Despite widespread indications of the courage and industry on the part of Southern people, many were still idle and starving:

Not a few complaints of young men who were indisposed to put their hands to any useful task were heard.

88 Ibid., pp. 364-365.
They were riding labor ... like the old man of the sea. They would practice law or medicine, lecture or manage a plantation: all of them would be gentlemen. Thus it was that in every community there were young fellows from the better classes of society, as well as from the rabble, ready to bait the negroes, embezzle funds, steal horses, make forays for adventure, robbery or revenge, murder men, ravish women, start fires and riots.  

On August 10, 1863, Gypsy Rushing wrote to Charles Moore describing conditions of lawlessness that grew even worse during reconstruction. After explaining that he would have written sooner had the "Guerrillas" not been so thick "through here that the cars did not run regular," he continued:

There is plenty of men known as Guerrillas through here yet doing all kinds of devilment stealing horses robbing stores of their goods and Union men of their money. The Federals have tried several times to rout them but have failed so far. They have so many friends through here that gives them information that they always skeedaddle out of the way, when the Feds gets after them.  

March 6, 1865, found J. C. Moore writing to Charles Moore from Flatwoods, Tennessee:

The Guirrellah or bushwhacking business has been moderately quiet since my last. There has been some wagons robbed on the U. V. & Nash V. pike but that is almost an everyday business. I have no doubt but what there is an organized clan of robbers in this part of the state. Some of which belong to each of the Armies.  

In Texas, which escaped from some of the worst rigors of  

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89 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, p. 378.  
90 MS letter in State Historical Collection.  
91 MS letter in State Historical Collection.
war and reconstruction, the "jay hawks" were very bad, "stealing robing & some murdering." 92  "In truth, there were few parts of the South which were free of jayhawksers, guer-rillas, and common vagrants, ready to beg and steal, if not to take human life." 93

In some localities the native whites who retained respect for law and order formed societies for law enforcement. One such society in Tennessee is described in a letter from J. C. Moore to Charles Moore, August 16, 1864:

Times are quiet, with the exception of occasional raids of horse thieves and robbers. There has been a company organized just across the creek, for the purpose of putting down all such jay hawking, or robing, and they have done some good service, although it is not every body that will acknowledge it.... They have authority from Murfreesboro, and such as cannot furnish there own arms, have them furnished them by the Government. There is some mean men amongst them, but the intentions of the most of them are good, notwithstanding they may doe something sometime, under excitement, that they should not doe. 94

In some places, as indicated in a letter from H. S. Moore to Charles Moore, dated August 16, 1865, at Mill Creek, Arkansas, law and order were restored before reconstruction set in: "Some people in this country are afraid to meet their old neighbors but I am afraid of nobody since stealing has gone out of fashion." 95 And six weeks later he was writing to his father from Miller, Arkansas: "After all there are

92 E. D. Rushing to Josephus -----, undated. MS letter in State Historical Collection.
93 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, p. 100.
94 MS letter in State Historical Collection.
95 MS letter in State Historical Collection.
yet honest men in this country although from what I have seen during the war the great mass of mankind when the wholesome restraints of good government is removed from them they are a pack of scoundrels."\(^{96}\)

There were people in the South who, observing the conditions of lawlessness and anarchy that maintained during the days of governmental lethargy, were crying out: "Give me a Russian Turkish or Austrian despotism rather than no law!"\(^{97}\)

Lawlessness and the activities of lawbreakers produced a peculiar psychology among certain Southerners:

I would not leave here this fall for anything for moving at present means thief generally.... Society is in a fair way to improve as the thieves are in a big way of rolling out while all honest men without reference to old politics can hold up their heads, stay at home and rejoice.\(^{98}\)

A month earlier the same writer had penned the words: "People are becoming more civilized again, and I have not heard of any outbreak in a good while though we are living without law."\(^{99}\)

Describing the attempt occasioned by some planters to perpetuate slavery even in the face of legal freedom, Schurz

\(^{96}\)MS letter in State Historical Collection.

\(^{97}\)J. M. Dixon to Charles Moore, undated. MS letter in State Historical Collection.

\(^{98}\)H. S. Moore to his father, September 26, 1865. MS letter in State Historical Collection.

\(^{99}\)H. S. Moore to Charles Moore, August 16, 1865. MS letter in State Historical Collection.
Some planters held back their former slaves on their plantations by brute force. Armed bands of white men patrolled the country roads to drive back the Negroes wandering about. Dead bodies of murdered Negroes were found on and near the highways and by-paths. Gruesome reports came from the hospitals --- reports of colored men and women whose ears had been cut off, whose skulls had been broken by blows, whose bodies had been slashed by knives or lacerated by scourges. A number of such cases I had occasion to examine myself. A veritable reign of terror prevailed in many parts of the South. The Negro found scant justice in the local courts against the white man. He could look for protection only to the military forces of the United States still garrisoning the "states lately in rebellion" and to the Freedmen's Bureau. 100

Instances were not lacking of actual slavery having been continued for years after emancipation until the Bureau or some other organization discovered it, and saw to it that the Negroes in the case were given redress in the form of wages for the period of their enforced servitude. 101 Often the planter kept a favorite former slave woman as his concubine or wife in order to exploit her children, who, however, in the new order of things had to be maintained by their white father, who could not legally profit from them as chattels. 102

And here and there was a former master who could not forget his old authority; in such cases the ex-slaves made insolent and offensive use of their new freedom. But these instances were rare, the exception rather than the rule, and

102 Ibid., p. 339.
rested rather upon the peculiarities of individual temperament than upon any fixed condition of conduct inherent in the disrupted social system.  

A South Carolinian, talking with Trowbridge about the attitude of the Southern whites toward the freed Negroes, said:

"We can't feel towards them as you do; I suppose we ought to, but 't isn't possible for us. They've always been our owned servants, and we've been used to having them mind us without a word of objection, and we can't bear anything else from them now. If that's wrong, we're to be pitied sooner than blamed, for it's something we can't help."

A disinclination of an important element of the able-bodied white men of the South to work was one of the social attitudes that retarded progress. People were condemned and ostracized for "working in the field, just like a nigger. If you work with a nigger, he despises you for equalizin' yourself with him. Any man is a dog-goned fool to work, when he can make a nigger work for him." The fundamental cause of this attitude was a failure to realize the full significance of the outcome of the Civil War — that the gentlemanly leisure of the old regime could be no more, that the Negro was made for any other purpose than to serve the white man. A few even dared to dream of a time when "the landed aristoc-

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103 William H. Trescot, op. cit., p. 274.
105 F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 323.
cracy will, in a measure, be reinstated in their position of independence and influence," and argued that "an elevated race ... based upon landed proprietorship, is the life and light of society."\textsuperscript{106}

Some of the families, not immediately prostrated by the war, tried to keep up the old styles: they rode in carriages with liveried outriders, gave dinners, entertained their guests with rare wines. But gradually the elegance diminished: they became their own drivers, opened their own gates, spoiled their fine horses by plow service, did not replace the decayed vehicles preserved during the war. The carriages of the "best-off" citizens became lumbering, shabby, old ante-bellum coaches, drawn by two shabby mules; the harness was patched, the whip was worn down half and perhaps spliced --- all because of the gospel of labor and thrift that was preached so fervently.\textsuperscript{107}

There were those who tried to throw off the outmoded aspects of their old civilization, advocating abandonment of the large plantations and of the concentration on cotton, and the substitution of small farms, mining, and diversification of industry and crops. Likewise discarded were certain aspects of social status, some of which have already been indicated. Gentlemen were no longer required to engage in "extraordinary conduct" --- the number of duels in eleven years follow-

\textsuperscript{106}F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 324.

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid., pp. 318-319, 328.
ing the war was less than the number in one year prior to the war. Men would rarely fight duels when their death might mean the starvation of their families; they were slower to challenge and to draw; the war had given deliberation and control over impulses and hot blood. Care was exercised in the spending of money; lavishness decreased. More economical refreshments were served at social gatherings; betting rapidly declined, and gambling almost entirely disappeared. Aristocrats who formerly would not wait to receive their change upon making a purchase, or would thrust it into their pockets uncounted, now counted it over carefully when it was handed to them. 108

Stephen Powers, visiting Charleston in 1872, analyzed the social classes to be found there and throughout the South in the following manner:

Charleston is a city, first, of idle, ragged Negroes, who, with no visible means of support, nevertheless send an astonishing multitude to school; second, of small dealers, laborers, and German artisans, starving on the rebel custom; third, of widows and children of planters keeping respectable boarding-houses, or pining in hopeless and unspeakable penury; fourth, of young men loafing in the saloons, and living on the proceeds of their mothers' boarding-houses; fifth, of Jews and Massachusetts merchants doing well on the semi-loyal and Negro custom; sixth, of utterly worthless and accursed political adventurers from the North, Bureau leeches and promiscuous knaves, all fattening on the humiliation of the South and the credulity of the Freedmen. 109

Upon the whites in many communities a kind of moral and

109 Ibid., p. 316.
social stagnation settled down --- "an unhealthy, hopeless acquiescence in the worst that might come.... Whites, as well as blacks, drank recklessly. Few of any class cared much for education."\textsuperscript{110}

On Saturdays the otherwise quiet streets of the villages became bedlams; farmers spent their money as readily for drink as for necessities. Men who were usually law-abiding became profane and noisy and tumbled into the ditches in helpless stupor. The worst characters brandished their pistols and sometimes committed crimes. "The pent-up anger of the white man toward the Negro flared, under the stimulus of drink, into acts of violence because the Negro was assuming new liberties." So real were the dangers on such occasions that it became traditional for ladies and children not to venture out on the streets on Saturday afternoons. A prosecuting officer observed: "I believe drunkenness to be the cause, on the average, of not less than nine-tenths of the crimes of violence prevailing among the whites since the war."\textsuperscript{111} Many, attempting to gain oblivion from misfortune, were driven to drink.\textsuperscript{112}

An unharmful but crude and uncultured habit of the men was that of chewing and spitting tobacco on all occasions, seemingly without consciousness of causing offense to finer

\textsuperscript{110}E. Benjamin Andrews, The United States in Our Time, p. 114.

\textsuperscript{111}F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 322.

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 321.
sensibilities. Whereas homes, offices, churches, court-
houses, and all other places where men congregated, were e-
quipped with spittoons, they seldom served a useful purpose,
for the professional expectorators paid no attention to them,
but spit on the walls and floors. Railway cars reeked with
the smell of tobacco, and were "usually floating an inch deep
in liquid brown juice." Charleston ladies were forced to en-
ter protests against white youths who congregated on the side-
walks and expectorated so carelessly that the skirts of the
passing ladies were ruined.\footnote{113}

The poor discipline of society was illustrated by the
quality of servants tolerated in most homes able to employ
them. Laundresses damaged the clothing --- iron-rusted it,
tore it, broke the buttons off, and burned it brown. Cooks
were notorious for their wastefulness and uncleanliness. The
seven to ten dollars paid them each month, with their board,
was only the beginning of their cost: their husbands and
hordes of pickaninnies were fed from the master's table and
kept warm with wood from his woodpile. The principle of len-
ience and license toward servants was tolerated and employed
because every family with any pretension to social position
felt an obligation to retain a few servants, inefficient though
they might be. For, "to be waited on is the normal arrange-
ment of Southern life."\footnote{114}

\footnote{113} F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 323.
\footnote{114} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 319-320.
In an analysis of the whole life of the Southern people, even down to the commonest aspects, evidences of uncertainty, of laxness in ideals, of confusion as to proper courses to follow, of disruption of all phases of the time-honored civilization of the South would be everywhere present. The Civil War, bringing its heritage of confusion and chaos, bred untold evils to plague the people, forcing them to undertake the erection of new social, economic, and political structures, for "an old age had passed away, a new age had come in, with the sweep of that stupendous storm." 115

"BLACK CODES"

Emancipation placed the freedman in a singularly enigmatic position: liberated from slavery, he constituted the gravest problem in the South; but because he was unenlightened, unlettered, and unpropertied, he was denied a part in the solution of the problem of which he himself was the nucleus. He had to stand by, outside the councils, while those who had ruled his life in slavery fixed his status in freedom. 116

The freedman, without money or land, naturally inclined to idleness rather than to labor, now frequently bearing the firearms denied in slavery, could but seem a menace to the community. His white neighbor

115 Emory Q. Hawk, op. cit., p. 425.
116 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 126.
wished him well, but prudently prepared for eventualities. The situation moreover was threatening in that as the law knew only whites and slaves, there was no criminal law against freedmen, even when the old codes were recognized by the military. The very class most needing regulation were without law. 117

The South desired to fit the emancipated Negro into the new social order by frankly recognizing his inferiority, and in some cases socially segregating him from the whites. Laws must be passed which would meet many needs: the regulation of family life, morals, and conduct; establishing a status in court for the freedman so that he might be protected in person and property; caring for the old, infirm, and orphans; providing an opportunity for education; compelling the Negro to get a home, settle down, and go to work. 118 In brief, the underlying factors that stimulated a need for such legislation were that,

For a race whose place in Southern economy was necessarily to remain chiefly agrarian, the blacks manifested a distressing tendency to congregate in cities and towns.... Leaving home without resources, unused to any notion of labor contracts, the freedmen were tossed about, suffering heavy mortality, turning to thievery, leaving their wives, and in some cases committing serious crimes. 119

Woodrow Wilson 120 gives a concise summary of the grave situation confronting the South shortly after emancipation:

117Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 33.
The country filled with vagrants, looking for pleasure and gratuitous fortune. Idleness bred want, as always, and the vagrants turned thieves or importunate beggars. The tasks of ordinary labor stood untouched; the idlers grew insolent, dangerous; nights went anxiously by, for fear of riot and incendiary fire. It was imperatively necessary that something should be done, if only to bring order again and make the streets of the towns and the highways of the country-sides safe to those who went about their tasks.

Southern legislatures promptly undertook remedies of their own, for reconstruction had put the South on the defensive; and, struggling under intolerable conditions, that section framed "black codes" and organized night riders, feeling that no other methods would be adequate.121

Contrary to Northern interpretation, these codes were not actually an embodiment of the spirit of defiance toward the North or any attempt to evade the conditions imposed by the victors; in reality, they were a "conscientious and straightforward" attempt to bring order out of the social and economic chaos in which the war and emancipation had resulted.122

In Southern opinion, four years of warfare, "conducted on principles of vandalism, disgraceful to the civilization of the age," was not worse than the "black incubus" of free Negroes who, directed by the Freedmen's Bureau, were a "hideous curse"; and the only remedy was seen to be in laws to

121Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 162.

protect the whites as well as the blacks.123

What to do with all the helpless and untutored Negroes was the chief problem, in attempttion a solution to which each Southern legislature early passed laws which to the Southerners seemed as generous as possible. But these laws put pressure upon the Negro to compel him to work and would thereby accomplish two purposes: rid the country of vagrants and idlers, and provide a labor supply for the plantations. The black man was legally thrust back again into what was almost slavery, yet he must be made to support himself and his dependents against starvation and want.124 These laws were designed to aid in the rehabilitation into society of large masses of freedmen possessing "poverty of mind, poverty of thought, poverty of means, poverty of self-government, poverty of energy, and rich in idleness with all their miseries."125 Had the Southern states not passed these laws, greater chaos would have resulted.126

To a large extent the laws were a protection to the Negro, and in general they extended, rather than restricted, his rights. That they were framed in haste and contained certain unfortunate provisions is certainly to be conceded by all, but in the main they were the outgrowth of many decades

123Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, p. 126.
125James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, pp. 112-113.
of social experience in the South, and were devised by men conversant with conditions. "They were not, in the main intent, framed or enforced in any spirit of oppression."\textsuperscript{127}

These enactments to restrict freedom were interpreted by the North as being a grudging bestowal of certain civil rights that were counterbalanced by the application of harsh criminal legislation. Everywhere the Negro was given the right to sue and to be sued, and to testify in court when colored persons were concerned. Relationships of man and wife and joint responsibility for the children were recognized. The privilege of serving on juries or in militia was nowhere bestowed, nor the rights to vote and to hold office. The laws relating to apprenticeship, vagrancy, and contract labor bore heavily on numbers of colored men and in some states tended toward a system of peonage. The blacks were, throughout the South, virtually forbidden to assemble, their freedom of movement was rigidly restricted, and some legislatures deprived them of the means of personal defense. The Negro was forbidden, under pain of arrest, to be abroad at night after the ringing of the curfew at nine o'clock, without the written permission of his employer.\textsuperscript{128} These laws were not passed to defy the North, but to solve grave Southern problems.\textsuperscript{129}

Since the "black codes" were framed "to assist in getting

\textsuperscript{127}J. G. Randall, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 728.

\textsuperscript{128}Woodrow Wilson, \textit{A History of the American People}, V, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{129}James F. Rhodes, \textit{op. cit.}, V, pp. 555-556.
the negro into a place in the social order, "it seems from that viewpoint not only to have been "on the whole reasonable, temperate, and kindly, but, in the main, necessary," if the South was to be saved from a black avalanche. Nevertheless, they became valuable ammunition for radical guns.

The severity of the "black codes" seems to have been directly proportional to the density of Negro population, and since Mississippi was one of the states in which blacks were in a majority, her black laws were typical of all, though variations were to be noted in the degree of severity.

In that state the law of apprenticeship applied to all Negro children under eighteen who were orphans or were receiving no support from their parents. These were to be apprenticed by the probate court, to a suitable person, preferably to the former master or mistress. The court fixed the terms, with the interest of the minor especially in view. The period of apprenticeship was to last until boys were twenty-one and girls were eighteen. No punishments not allowed to parents and guardians were to be administered, but should the apprentice run away, he was to be apprehended and returned; the court, upon investigating the cause of desertion, might fine the master for ill-treatment and give the money to the appren-

130 The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, p. 5.
132 W. B. Hesseltine, A History of the South, pp. 598-599.
The master was compelled to give bond that he would provide sufficient food, clothing, and medical attention; that he would treat the apprentice humanely; and, if the apprentice were under fifteen, that he would be taught to read and write.

The law of vagrancy defined as vagrants all freedmen over eighteen having no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling, and all whites assembling with them or "usually associating with freedmen, free negroes, or mulattoes, on terms of equality." If the Negro did not pay his fine in five days, he was hired out by the sheriff to the person who would pay the fine and costs in return for the shortest term of service on the part of the vagrant. The same treatment was meted out for failure to pay taxes. "This statute meant legal servitude for any negro not finding employment, and the same penalty for a white man who merely consorted with negroes on equal terms."

In the laws granting civil rights, all Negroes were to have the same rights as whites with respect to personal property, suing and being sued, but they were restricted as to districts in which they might rent, lease, or buy lands or property. Slave marriages were legalized, and the Negro

134 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 290.
136 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 290.
137 Ibid., p. 291.
was given the right of marriage within his own race, but marriage between whites and blacks was to be punished with life imprisonment. Every Negro was entitled to home and employment, and might hold licenses to do job work, or written contracts to labor. Any laborer leaving his job before his contract expired, forfeited all wages due him at the time of his departure. Any one inticing a worker to desert, or selling or giving food or raiment, knowingly, to a deserter from contract labor, was to be fined or imprisoned. No Negro could carry arms without public license. For any offense, if the black could not pay the fine, he was to be "farmed out" to any one who would assume the expense. 138

Other enactments decreed that

any freedman, free negro or mulato, committing riots, routs, affrays, trespasses, malicious mischief, cruel treatment to animals, seditious speeches, insulting gestures, language or acts, or assaults on any person, disturbances of the peace, exercising the functions of a minister of the gospel without a license from some regularly organized church, vending spiritous liquors, or committing any other misdemeanor, the punishment of which is not specifically provided for by law, 139

was to be fined from ten to one hundred dollars, and imprisoned not over thirty days.

In Mississippi the legislative committee that had considered freedmen's legislation, reported that it had "labored earnestly to secure justice, employment, labor, income, reward, home, comfort, security, health, sobriety, good morals, and

139 J. G. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 147.
protection to person and property." In concluding its report, the committee declared: "While some of the legislation might seem rigid and stringent to the sickly modern humanitarians, it could never disturb or retard the good and true of either race."140

Perhaps evaluating the codes throughout somewhat prejudiced eyes, Du Bois was convinced that they "meant nothing more nor less than slavery in daily toil."141

Schurz had predicted the "black codes" before they knew existence:

The emancipation of the slaves is submitted to only in so far as chattel slavery in the old form could not be kept up. But although the freedman is no longer considered the property of the individual master, he is considered the slave of society, and all independent State legislation will share the tendency to make him such. The ordinances abolishing slavery passed by the conventions under the pressure of circumstances, will not be looked upon as barring the establishment of a new form of servitude.142

Although many Southerners held the passage of the "black codes" to be imperative, such legislation was the worst misfortune that could have befallen Johnson's administration in Washington which, up to that time, had been moving forward smoothly but cautiously in its dealings with the prodigal South. Now, however, a cloud of hostile criticism of his lenient policy arose, condemning it for allowing such laws to

140 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 113.
142 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 129-130.
be enacted by the Southern legislatures. Through searching for a solution to myriad problems, these law-making bodies had "unconsciously furnished one of the most important and effective instrumentalities of attack upon the South and upon President Johnson's plan of restoration."144

The North seethed with storms of protest, and the Chicago Tribune of December 1, 1865, even went so far as to declare:

We tell the white men of Mississippi that the men of the North will convert the state of Mississippi into a frog pond before they will allow any such laws to disgrace one foot of soil in which the bones of our soldiers sleep and over which the flag of freedom waves.145

The North, aroused to a fever-heat of excitement over a few laws on the statute books of the outlawed states of the South, feared that the four years' bloody war had been fought in vain.146 To the radicals, the "black codes" proved that the Southerners were not accepting the results of the war but were seeking to re-establish the fact if not the name of slavery. "If the Negro were to be saved from re-enslavement, the Federal Government would have to protect him against his former masters."147 This "protection" took the form of an indefinite extension of the Freedmen's Bureau over the veto of the President.

143I. H. Gipson, "The Statesmanship of President Johnson," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, II (December, 1915), 376.
144J. G. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 137.
145James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 115.
146Maurice S. Evans, op. cit., p. 50.
147W. B. Hesseltine, A History of the South, pp. 599-600.
The "black codes" unwittingly aided radical reconstruction, the leaders of which held up the most extreme codes as typical of all the South, and the masses never knew the difference, but formed their hostile opinions from the distorted and misrepresented statutes publicized for them to inspect. Two Southern states, Tennessee and Arkansas, had no codes at all, and some of the others had codes more liberal than those in the North. But the North steadfastly refused to believe that the South could have worthy motives or kindly feelings toward the Negroes, or any sincerity in accepting defeat and its consequences, and used the ill-fated codes as justification for venomous attacks and harsh legislation.\textsuperscript{148}

Yet some men, even in the North, had favorable opinions of the system of "black codes":

Taken as a whole and considered as the work of men who had within a year been absolute masters of the freedmen, and who had been dispossessed of their control by war and conquest, it must be conceded that it exhibits remarkable self-control, public spirit, and equity.\textsuperscript{149}

The Negroes, aided by Northern agitators, could see only the undesirable features of the codes, and feel their power as a result of violation. The North came to their aid, repudiated the codes, and suddenly elevated the Negro for a time; but when reconstruction was over, the Negro had difficulty in deciding whether, as a result of these momentous days, he had

\textsuperscript{148}J. G. Hamilton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 157-158.

\textsuperscript{149}Ibid., p. 156.
been advanced or retarded in progress.

Meanwhile, in the midst of social chaos and economic upheaval, the South was attempting to find itself:

In the South a wholly new social and political structure was to be built out of the wreckage of that which conquest had destroyed, and the foundation must be laid by some distinct determination of the rights and duties of the freedmen and by the construction of state governments.150

But many tortuous roads were to be traversed before the process reached culmination.

The Negroes' attitude toward freedom had been in every way natural and an inevitable outgrowth of conditions that were rife in the South for a decade after emancipation. The blacks were free from the bonds of slavery, and this, to numbers of them, meant liberty from labor. Another phase of the development of this philosophy was the fact that needy freedmen were fed, clothed, and in some cases sheltered by the Freedmen's Bureau and other organizations established in the disrupted South to care for the Negroes and to assist them in rehabilitating themselves in the new society that found its birth in the aftermath of war. The freedmen were converted into wards of the nation, and as such many of them looked to the government for subsistence and for economic, political, and social advancement. Whereas in slavery, labor had been compulsory, now after emancipation it was believed by some freedmen, carefully coached by Northern and Southern agitators intent upon augmenting their

150 William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, pp. 16-17.
personal fortunes, to be optional and utterly undesirable.

A disrupted labor supply, disorganized and frequently impudent, was one of the chief causes of the formulation of "black codes," originally framed by the leaders of the South to control certain elements of unruly blacks and to keep them "in their place." They were designed to meet an immediate need --- that of imparting to the freedman a legal status, of defining his social position in terms of that of his former masters, and of curbing his freedom by a series of laws regulating his economic activities. For as a class the freedmen were considered a dangerous menace to the security of the former slaveholding group. As slaves, many of the Negroes had been trusted and relied upon by their masters; now, as freedmen, they were regarded with apprehension as to what their intended course might be. Whereas many ex-slaves remained on the plantations and continued in much the same relationship with the planters as before emancipation, those wandering about the country in idle bands were feared.

Members of the white aristocracy were confused, alarmed, and impatient with the freedmen in view of the manner in which they were using their liberty. In a society whose cornerstone had long been slavery and whose labor supply had been slaves, extreme difficulty was met in accommodation to new conditions; the whites could not comprehend the meaning of freedom for their slaves, nor could they be aware of all that emancipation implied, both for themselves and for the blacks; the Negroes had suddenly been invested with new powers and an unfamiliar status whose meanings to most of them were vague.
A complete reconstruction of the Union and a rehabilitation of the South were the urgent and difficult tasks that followed naturally upon the end of the war. Their successful accomplishment must of necessity satisfy the sentiment of the great Union party in the North and must be willingly accepted in the South.¹ In view of this fact, the term "reconstruction" when applied to the years following Lincoln is a misnomer, for the word itself implies repairing the damage of war, returning to normal activity and rational thinking, righting wartime blunders, rebuilding the nation. Actually, these years were a time of "party abuse, of corruption, of vindictive bigotry." As an aftermath of war, they were very similar to the period after Wilson, characterized by "prevalence of crime, intolerant mass psychology, speculative excess, business depression, moral slump, official sinning...."² Even as early as 1868 the Southern states were far different from what they had been in 1860; true, they had experienced restoration after a fashion, "but it had been accompanied by a revolution in society, in politics, and in economic life.

¹James F. Rhodes, op. cit., V, p. 516.
²J. G. Randall, op. cit., p. 689.
'Reconstruction' is an inappropriate name for what took place.\textsuperscript{3} Two successive purposes of the Civil War had been the restoration of the Union and the abolition of slavery; but after the War those states that had abolished slavery, repudiated secession, and petitioned for readmission to the Union were repulsed and denied recognition under the vindictive charge that their citizens had been wartime traitors.\textsuperscript{4} In the South, the most pressing need at first was police control of the freedmen, and after that, the restoration of the disrupted political structure.\textsuperscript{5} Hence, how to train and treat the liberated slaves became a central problem of reconstruction, though by no means the only one. The first major act of the drama of reconstruction was to be "the attempt of the native whites to build a new political society out of the wreck of the old."\textsuperscript{7} But when these attempts were repudiated by the radicals in Congress, who substituted their own harsh plan, it became reconstruction, rather than the Civil War, that destroyed the old South.\textsuperscript{8} For reconstruction in its final form meant not only political, but also economic and so-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{3} Frederic L. Paxson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 39.
\item \textsuperscript{4} J. G. Randall, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 689.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Peter J. Hamilton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 432.
\item \textsuperscript{6} W. E. B. Du Bois, "Reconstruction and Its Benefits," \textit{American Historical Review}, XV (July, 1910), p. 781.
\item \textsuperscript{7} F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{8} W. B. Hesseltine, \textit{A History of the South}, p. 573.
\end{itemize}
cial destruction. The South was thus compelled to begin the process of rebuilding all her social, economic, and political structures at the bottom. 9

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Lincoln's plan of reconstruction was a perfect embodiment of generosity and liberalism to those lately in rebellion. It granted full amnesty to all who had taken up arms against the Federal Government, on the condition of their taking oath to support the Constitution and all laws and proclamations relating to slavery until such should be overruled. Certain important exceptions to amnesty, however, were enumerated: diplomatic and high military officials of the Confederacy; those who had left Congress or the United States Army or Navy to aid the Confederacy; those who had maltreated Negro prisoners of war. The seceded states might resume their former relations in the Union whenever ten percent of the voters in any state in 1860 had registered and taken the oath of allegiance to the Constitution and had framed a "loyal" state government. 10

Lincoln was assured that the majority of Northerners supported his sentiment when, in discussing his reconstruction plan, he said: "I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing." 11 But a schism soon


10George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 269.

developed in the Republican party: radical members wanted, not mere restoration of the South, but a restoration that would serve their own economic and political ambitions. These men believed that Lincoln's plan was "nothing short of an open-armed welcome to the prodigals," and were at first delighted when Johnson came upon the scene breathing hatred and vengeance upon "odious traitors." But underneath his hard words Johnson was fundamentally generous and tender, and when he adopted the main features of Lincoln's plan as his own, the praises of radical Congressmen turned to excoriations. Johnson's plan differed from Lincoln's in two respects: other exceptions to amnesty, such as owners of property valued at $20,000, were made; but those upon amnesty was not conferred might make special application to the President for pardon; in such cases, clemency would be "liberally extended." Like Lincoln, Johnson would definitely confine the suffrage to the whites, with the stipulation that each Southern state might decide whether it would establish a "qualified" Negro suffrage, which both Presidents favored.

Johnson looked to a prompt and early return of the states, other than the three that had qualified under Lincoln, and he was not disappointed, for:

These overtures for formal reconstruction came to communities impoverished, forlorn, and chaotic, almost

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beyond imagination. Property, industry, social order, had been torn up by the plowshare of war. The prolongation of resistance until defeat was complete and overwhelming had ended all power and all wish to contend with the inevitable. The people, groping back toward even a bare livelihood, --- toward some settled order, some way of public and private life, --- met eagerly the advances of the President.14

The Presidents' plans of reconstruction were "scrupulously constitutional"15 throughout, and encouraged government by the whites who had formerly governed and who had been in rebellion, with, at first, no recognition of the Negro as a political force. But certain Congressmen were influencing Johnson, persuading him that to free the Negro without investing him with the power to protect his freedom, was a sheer mockery of justice. So, at last, Johnson was compelled to write to the provisional governors in the South, urging them to extend the suffrage to all persons of color who could read the Constitution, who paid taxes on real estate valued at $250 or more, and who could write their names.16 This rule, of course, would appertain to only a small minority of the blacks.

Radical Congressmen, obsessed with a perverted sense of humanitarianism, professed to believe that the main object of reconstruction should be to help the Negro, and hence were ill pleased with all that had transpired toward that end.17 They apparently felt a necessity that the Federal Government should,

15L. H. Gipson, op. cit., p. 381.
17Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 430.
in flagrant violation of the Constitution, law, and vested rights, stretch out its mighty arm to keep the weaker race on top of the stronger one. Hence the social body was inverted; the feet were up and the head down. There was such a bubbling up of scum to the surface of the boiling cauldron as had never been seen before....

What most raised the ire of the radicals was the fact that the rebel governments were demanding immediate restoration to their former status in the government that they apparently had sought desperately to destroy. Coming to grips with Johnson on this matter, they labored, both "openly and secretly," to defeat the President. Sumner, whose influence permeated the Senate, thought that Congress "should be just to negroes before they were generous to rebels." Sumner, with most of the radicals, believed that the Southern states were still essentially rebel, but that they could be coerced into "loyalty" by a stricter reconstruction policy. Pursuing this idea, the radicals agitated Congress until they succeeded in having appointed a joint committee of fifteen which, when it reported, evinced a belief that the Negro was badly treated in the South; that the whites were essentially disloyal; that if left in control of the South, the Negro, free

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18 Charles Gayarre, op. cit., p. 481.
21 Don C. Seitz, The Dreadful Decade, p. 36.
22 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 170.
labor, the nation, and the Republican party would be endangered. The army and the Freedmen's Bureau must be kept indefinitely in the South; a policy of "radical reconstruction" was necessary. The committee made no serious effort to ascertain the true state of conditions in the South, but cleverly guided public sentiment toward radicalism.23

Gideon Welles, seeing the drift of the tide in Congress, wrote of the Southerners: "If they continue to organize themselves in opposition to the government, and strive to elect men on that basis, they will provoke stern measures against themselves."24

As a substitute for the President's policy, Congress first advanced the Fourteenth Amendment over Johnson's opposition. The great mistake here and in later radical legislation was the exclusion from power of the very men in the South who should have been included and counselled with.25 Some few conservatives in Congress insisted that no persons who had received amnesty should be excluded from functioning politically. But the conventional conservatives lacked courage, whereas the radicals lacked sense.26 Each faction was alternately opposing, conciliating, intimidating the other; Washington in those days was "the place where politicians were wire-pulling and spreading nets."27

26Gideon Welles, op. cit., III, p. 327.
27Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 82.
It was the angry rejection of the proposed Fourteenth Amendment that did more than "anything and everything else" to convince the people of the North that Congress must undertake the program of reconstruction, to proceed on the basis of a new Southern electorate that Congress would create. Garfield, speaking on February 8, 1867, expressed the sentiment of the main body who were gradually being influenced to a determination to follow the radicals: "The last one of the sinful ten has at last with contempt and scorn flung back into our teeth the magnanimous offer of a generous nation. It is now our turn to act." Congress now believed, without any foundation of facts, that actual conditions in the South called for sterner remedies than the Presidents had provided. Sumner and Stevens contemptuously spoke of Johnson's attempt at rehabilitating the South as "whitewashing the rebels"; and their policy was apparently to be one of whitewashing the Negroes.

By some means they meant to thrust their hands into southern affairs to control them, to make good the freedom and the privilege of the negroes, even at the cost of all privilege to those who had been their masters. To some such a course seemed a mere dictate of humanity; the nation owed it to the negro that he be supported by the federal power until he was able to make his freedom good for himself, unassisted. To others it seemed but the plain way of prudence in statesmanship. How else could a lasting structure of law be built about the new citizenship of the one-time slave: how else could he be kept safe from the intellectual and even physical domination.

28 John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 106.
30 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 221.
tion of the white men who once had owned him? To others it was the course of personal satisfaction; in no other way could they bring upon the spirits of southern men the punishment merited by their rebellion. To others it was but the obvious means of party mastery.31

This latter group ruled Congress after Lincoln. Stevens, Sumner, and their henchmen were ruthlessly set upon a policy of putting the white South "under the heel of the black South."32 For would not a solid Negro vote mean Republican success in the Democratic South?33 Too, the addition of four millions of people to the Southern population without a corresponding addition of voters, would increase the political power of the whites to an alarming degree, and would remove all checks upon its mischievous exercise.34 By the time Congress met in 1865, the leading radicals had agreed that Negro suffrage should be forced upon the South; one radical even declared that "our safety and the peace of the country requires us to disfranchise the rebels and enfranchise the colored citizens in the revolted states."35 The actual drift of opinion in the North was coming to be that equal suffrage was the sole condition by which there was any approach to una-


33 James F. Rhodes, op. cit., VI, p. 169.


nimity among the American people. But Congress, after it had won its point and ousted Johnson from control of the reconstruction policy, was careful not to recognize "equal suffrage"!

Schurz believed that the only way the Southern people could be "induced to grant to the freedmen some measure of self-protection power in the form of suffrage," was to make Negro suffrage a condition precedent to readmission to the Union.

Others, including Chief Justice Chase, defended universal suffrage on the grounds that it would be the surest "guaranty and most powerful stimulus of individual, social, and political progress." And yet, after "universal suffrage" --- which was not at all universal! --- had been thrust upon the South, some of those implicated in the deed saw its evil. William P. Frye, United States Senator, was one of these:

"It was a great and terrible mistake. But what else could we do? We had just won a great war and the South, coming back full white, meant the loss of our party's power, so we did as we did. I had as much to do with it as anybody. But it was a great and terrible mistake."  

Reconstruction's most lasting wrong to the South was the

36 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p.308.


38 E. P. Whipple, op. cit., p. 242.

39 Don C. Seitz, op. cit., p. 50.
inevitable political demoralization of the white man. In the orgy of bribery, corruption and intimidation, no one could longer regard the ballot-box as the sacred voice of the people -- "it was a plaything, a jack-in-the-box for the dark-eyes, a conjurer's trick that brought drinks, tips, and picnics. It was the carpet-bagger's stepping-stone to power. The votes of a multitude were for sale."40

It is difficult to believe that the reconstructionists deliberately and intentionally created such an unfortunate system of things wherein the Southern white man was rendered impotent. Because the South would not accord civil equality to the freedmen, because it would not accept the proposed Fourteenth Amendment, because it passed laws creating a new species of slavery or quasi-slavery for the blacks, the radical Congressmen felt that they were placed between the alternatives of continuing military government in the South indefinitely, or of giving the Negro political power with which to maintain for himself his own civil rights.41 Perhaps the whole resulting political debauchery was unintentional, but among some, at least, Negro supremacy was cunningly plotted. Senator Doolittle declared, just after the Congressional plan had been set in operation, that "the existing fabric of reconstruction legislation is general is to put the negro in power over the white race in all the States of the South and

40Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 288.
41John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 245.
keep him there. 42

Congress' plan of reconstruction, as finally perfected and set in motion, was contained in the well-known Reconstruction Act of March, 1867. It is plain that the chief features of the plan were the enforcement of Negro suffrage throughout the South and the disfranchisement of the whites who had been leaders in the old South. 43 By the end of May, 1865, the authority of the United States met no opposition from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, although imperceptible fires of inward rebellion were smoldering in many Southern breasts. To the people of the North the extension of Federal power over the South meant that their passionate desire of 1861 had been attained --- the Union was preserved. But to the people of the South it meant that their bitterest forebodings had come true --- they were subjugated by an alien power. 44

Among the thinking men of the North the Congressional reconstruction policy was odious and ill-advised. General Grant, an advocate of tolerance, said, "The true policy should be to make friends of enemies." 45 In the South General Lee affirmed that the Southern people believed the North could "well afford to be generous," and that that was the "best policy." But the radicals, manipulating the processes of reconstruction to their own advantage and preparing to ride to

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42 James G. Randall, op. cit., p. 760.
44 William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, pp. 3-4.
power on the votes of the freedmen, had no time for generosity.

And in the end their reconstruction measures were to prove "a bridge of wood over a river of fire." 46

RADICAL POLICIES IN THE SOUTH

The South was defeated, wounded, and bleeding; but instead of soothing her wounds with salve, the radicals thrust salt into them. 47 Puzzlement, confusion, and resentment were created by the Congressional plan of reconstruction. The Southerners had accepted defeat, had consented to the liberation of their slaves, and had set up loyal governments, thinking that nothing further would be required. Then, when their representatives were ignored in Washington, they grew indignant. They balked at the Fourteenth Amendment. What assurance had they that even this would be final? A strong feeling prevailed that the new policy implied that the reconstruction governments, now two years old, were not even provisional, but void. Uncertainty was manifest everywhere. 48

No decade in American history is so dark with foolish blunders and foul wrongs as that which the South experienced

46 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 367.
from 1865 to 1875,49 but the chief wrongs were perpetrated after the radicals gained control of reconstruction in 1867, after which the prostrate South was fast in the grip of the Freedmen's Bureau, Northern school teachers, and the shiftless freedmen.

Her great offenses --- what led Congress to denounce her as still in rebellion --- were first, that she had passes laws against vagrancy; but this had been done to protect property from millions of idlers, mostly of the freedman class; and, second, that she was unwilling to receive the slaves as political equals, competent to vote and to hold public office. These bitter pills she could not swallow in a moment. After awhile, however, she submitted to the inevitable, and, in order to get some kind of government and go to work to rebuild her shattered fortunes, accepted the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the constitution.50

What Pike wrote of South Carolina could have been said, with only slight variations, of any part of the South during the era of reconstruction:

It lies prostrate in the dust, ruled over by this strange conglomerate, gathered from the ranks of its own servile population. It is the spectacle of a society suddenly turned bottomside up. The wealth, the intelligence, the culture, the wisdom of the state, have broken through the crust of that social volcano on which they were contentedly reposing, and have sunk out of sight, consumed by the subterranean fires they had with such temerity braved and defied.51

Never before in the recorded history of the world had a

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50 John L. Hall, op. cit., p. 278.
51 James S. Pike, op. cit., p. 12.
conqueror taken the lowest, most ignorant classes --- the plowmen, stable attendants, and scavengers --- and made them governors, legislators, judges, and rulers of provinces. It was little wonder that radical reconstruction in the South, carried on in some instances under the leadership of such persons, was a mistake and a failure.52

Along with Negro suffrage, the political power of the South was placed in sable hands and in the tainted hands of Northern exploiters, many of whom were utterly ignorant of the duties of citizenship, and to whom the very phrases used in political discourse were as meaningless as Greek and Hebrew.53

Chief among the charges against the Negro-carpetbag governments were those of extravagance, attacks on property, theft, and incompetence; never was there any serious charge that they threatened civilization or the foundations of the social order. Du Bois,54 whose unprejudiced viewpoint may be questioned, said:

The charge that they threatened property and that they were inefficient is in part undoubtedly true, but often exaggerated. The South had been terribly impoverished and saddled with new social burdens. In other words, states with smaller resources were asked not only to do a work of restoration, but a larger social work. The property holders were aghast. They not only demurred, but, predicting ruin and revolution, they appealed

52Charles Gayarre, op. cit., p. 482.
to secret societies, to intimidation, force, and murder. They refused to believe that these novices in government were aught but scamps and fools. Under the circumstances occurring directly after the war, the wisest statesman would have been compelled to resort to increased taxation and would have, in turn, been execrated as extravagant, dishonest, and incompetent. It is easy, therefore, to see what flaming and incredible stories of reconstruction governments could gain wide currency and belief.

There is no question, however, that some states, such as South Carolina, which suffered the bitterest phases of reconstruction, were "almost completely at the mercy of white and black corruptionists."55 Of the abominable, distressing Republican rule in that state, the New York Tribune had its own opinion. On June 13, 1874, it lamented the fact that that state was

lying prostrate and helpless under the foot of the spoiler, her citizens imprisoned, business ruined, enterprise destroyed, lands sold for taxes, her people at the mercy of an ignorant and dishonest rabble, her legislators and her rulers a gang of unprincipled adventurers and shameless thieves.56

These adventurers and shameless thieves were telling the blacks that they were the political and social equal of the whites and that they should rule. But not all were rascals who came from the North; many of the carpetbaggers were wise and good; many were splendid patriots and humanitarians who became worthy citizens of the South.

Pike, noted for his vivid description, is at his best

56William H. Skaggs, op. cit., p. 60.
when describing the social and political upheaval in South Carolina, which was somewhat typical of all the South:

In the place of this old aristocratic society stands the rude form of the most ignorant democracy that mankind ever saw, invested with the functions of government. It is the dregs of the population habilitated in the robes of their intelligent predecessors, and asserting over them the rule of ignorance and corruption, through the inexorable machinery of a majority of numbers. It is barbarism overwhelming civilization by physical force. It is the slave rioting in the halls of his master, and putting that master under his feet. And, though it is done without malice and without vengeance, it is nevertheless none the less completely and absolutely done....

The rule of South Carolina should not be dignified with the name of government. It is the installation of a huge system of brigandage. The men who have had it in control, and who now have it in control, are the picked villains of the community. They are the highwaymen of the State. They are professional legislative robbers. They are men who studied and practiced the art of legalized theft. They are in no sense different from, or better than, the men who fill the prisons and penitentiaries of the world. They are, in fact, of precisely that class, only more daring and audacious. They pick your pockets by law. They rob the poor and the rich alike, by law. They confiscate your estate by law....

In the House of Representatives of South Carolina, Pike found that twenty-three of the one hundred twenty-four members were white men, "representing the remains of the old civilization." Although substantial citizens and men of high standing in their respective communities, they sat grim and silent among the black horde that guffawed, shouted, and engaged in fistfights all about them. To Pike they were

loose stones, thrown into the maelstrom to partially obstruct a current they are powerless to resist. They say

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57 James S. Pike, op. cit., pp. 12, 58.
little and do little as the days go by. They simply watch the rising tide, and mark the progressive steps of the inundation. They hold their places reluctantly. They feel themselves to be in some part martyrs, bound stoically to suffer in behalf of that still great element in the State whose prostrate fortunes are becoming the sport of an unpitying Fate. . . .

This dense negro crowd they confront do the debating, the squabbling, the law-making, create all the clamor and disorder of the body. These twenty-three white men are but the observers, the enforced auditors, of the dull and clumsy imitations of a deliberative body, whose appearance in their present capacity is at once a wonder and a shame to modern civilization. 58

In some of the state legislatures utter debauchery was the order of the day. The legislators made sport with the public treasury, perpetrated wholesale thefts at the expense of the state and to the personal enrichment of themselves, lived in luxury at state expense, and opened the coffers of the treasury to purchase all sorts of inconceivable articles entered on the books as legislative expenses. Legislation was made a carnival, with the legislators as the chief actors. And the public was not an amused audience, but a despairing victim. 59

Ignorance and greed having joined hands, corrupt men might make laws, propertyless men might levy taxes, illiterate men might conduct public school work, characterless men might serve as judges. The plunderers cared not; the blacks did not understand; the native whites could not resist the military force that threatened them. The South of Reconstruction days . . . lay chained and helpless while the vultures preyed on her


59 The writer deemed it unnecessary to treat in detail these corruptions in legislation; any good history text will provide the fundamental facts, but cf. James S. Pike, passim; James T. Adams, 389-390; William A. Dunning, 205-210; Walter L. Fleming, 235-240; Emory Q. Hawk, 434-442; etc.
Irregular election methods were adopted, demagoguery encouraged, bullyism condoned, politics corrupted.\textsuperscript{60}

To such a sad pass had affairs come that when a respectable man was elected to the legislature or to Congress, he and his family felt called upon to explain to strangers who might know nothing of the circumstances. Relatives would say, "Yes, ------ is in the legislature, but he is honest," before the suspicious "Hon." prefixed to his name brought judgment on a man who meant no harm and who was there more by accident than by desire.\textsuperscript{61}

In addition to the financial bankruptcy of the states, brought on by their reconstruction legislatures --- indebtedness increased by $131,717,777 in the eleven states from 1865 to 1871\textsuperscript{62} --- the planters of the South were faced with difficulties regarding their cotton. They were forbidden to use the great accumulated stores of that staple that might have served as the basis for a re-establishment of credit. Agents of the Federal Government seized the cotton that had been collected in warehouses under the Confederate taxes in kind, and cotton not so seized was subject to a 25\% tax, which alone put over $68,000,000 in the Federal treasury. Much cotton was illegally seized by unscrupulous agents of the treasury who were


\textsuperscript{61}Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., pp. 286-287.

\textsuperscript{62}William A. Dunning, Reconstruction, Political and Economic, p. 208.
working in the South, and for more than a generation the treasury was beset by Southerners holding claims against the government for cotton wrongfully seized; over 40,000 of these claimants were recompensed. 63

Secretary McCulloch of the Treasury Department, noting the depredations in the South, remarked: "I am sure I sent some honest cotton agents South; but it sometimes seems doubtful whether any of them remained honest very long." 64 The general demoralization offered opportunity for unprincipled Southerners to become cotton thieves by posing as government agents, and some of them were guilty of thus robbing their own destitute people.

Military government was not the worst feature of the reconstruction acts, for many honest Southerners would have preferred that above "negro rule forced on the South at the point of the bayonet, which was the actual result of this legislation." 65

But for the suggestions of soldiers and agitators, the former masters and slaves might easily have effected a social readjustment to their mutual benefit, but this was not the game intended. The negroes must be turned against their former masters.... 66

So effectively did radicalism come to dominate the South,

65 James F. Rhodes, op. cit., VI, p. 29.
66 Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 47.
that, no longer odious, it became the popular passport to power, utilized freely by those who held power above principle and money above morals. The South would have a long struggle to regain its political, social, and moral equilibrium --- a balance upset by radicalism and race.

LEGAL STATUS OF THE NEGRO UNDER RECONSTRUCTION

To most people, the era of reconstruction associates itself with one dominant fact --- the elevation of the Negro race in the United States to civil and political equality with the white race. This change implied a revolution in government and thought: "sudden, imperious, irrevocable." Destined to be the central figure of reconstruction, the Negro had, in 1861, been everywhere inferior in the South, and in most cases was a slave; in 1865, he was no longer a slave, but whether he was to be serf, ward, or citizen was an unsolved problem; by 1868 he was politically the equal, frequently the superior, of the Southern white; and before the end of reconstruction he was made by state and Federal legislation the legal equal of the white man even in certain social matters. Such, briefly, was the story of the evolution of the Negro in Southern life through reconstruction. The war had been fought partially for him, and with his remaining a problem,


68Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., preface, p. v.
though a freedman, "reconstruction meant more than the restor
ing of shattered resources; it meant the more or less suc
cessful attempt to obtain and secure for the freedman civil
and political rights, and to improve his economic and social
status."\(^{69}\)

The policy finally agreed upon by the radicals who were
promulgating reconstruction made the dominance of the Negro in
the South a principle of the very constitution of the Union.\(^{70}\)
The South, naturally, objected; but it had the noose of sup-
pression about its neck and could but voice its dismay that
its former slave had become its present ruler. Not through
his own volition, duly directed ambition, or effort did the
Negro win civil rights and political powers --- he almost had
them forced upon him by those who would "use" him for their
own political gain, though posing as humanitarians.\(^{71}\) Sadly,

The granting of political power to the negro, with-
out making provisions for training him in its proper ex-
ercise, lowered the whole tone of Southern politics,
while the attempt to force the forms of democracy upon a
people ignorant of its essence made the practice of
democracy impossible.\(^{72}\)

The "forcing of universal suffrage among the negroes upon
the South" was more conspicuous a failure than any other large

\(^{69}\)Walter L. Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 34-35.

\(^{70}\)Woodrow Wilson, \textit{A History of the American People}, V,
p. 58.

\(^{71}\)William A. Dunning, \textit{Reconstruction, Political and Eco-
nomic}, p. 213.

\(^{72}\)R. D. W. Connor, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45.
policy in American history.\textsuperscript{73} "Utter paralysis" prevailed in the section of the nation under consideration because of the prospect of "negro supremacy." Not demanding the right to control others, they in the South did ask that they be allowed to govern themselves, and this was the very right that, under radical reconstruction, was denied them.\textsuperscript{74}

The Negro, induced by the Federal Government to speculate in politics, and finding himself without adequate leadership of his own, turned to the carpetbaggers --- the representatives of the nation that had freed him, the dispensers of charity and protection. These men, seeing at once a rich opportunity for personal aggrandizement or the application of the principles for which they had fought, assumed the proffered leadership with alacrity.\textsuperscript{75}

A peculiar enigma of political existence was the Negro in his new status: suddenly given a prominent place in politics, he had had no preparation for it,\textsuperscript{76} and, naturally, the carpetbaggers and scalawags, usually more competent than the Negro, after black enfranchisement at first held the most important offices in the South; but the Negroes soon manifested discontent at this state of affairs and demanded a share of the offices for themselves, inasmuch as they supplied the votes!

\textsuperscript{73}James F. Rhodes, \textit{op. cit.}, VII, p. 168.
\textsuperscript{74}Ellis T. Oberholtzer, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{75}F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{76}Edgar W. Knight, \textit{Public Education in the South}, p. 333.
Consequently many important posts came to be held by ignorant blacks who had but recently been field hands on the plantations of their masters. Given these offices in conciliation, they retained them through intimidation and bribery.

The ballot was the medium through which the Negroes rose to power. In the polling-places, they always caused much confusion through having forgotten the names under which they had registered; and in many instances improvised names were placed on the ballots. In the beginning of the radical regime they were led to believe that they had no choice but to vote "for the Convention," and on voting day, some declared that they had come to vote for the "invention," the "inspection," or for a picture of "Linkum" on the ballots. They were told that if they desired to receive enough bacon for a year, they must vote rightly, or lose their rights if they voted wrongly. Ballot-box stuffing became an art, and Negroes were carefully inspected to see that they had the right kind of ticket before they were marched to the polls.

The freedman was made to feel that no longer would he be oppressed --- with the ballot in his hand, he would work out his own salvation and prove himself the equal of his late master.

Many of the blacks had no idea of the meaning of registration, and nearly always there was a great rush for fear that there would not be registrations enough to go 'round. Some believed that it was something to eat; others, that it was something to wear; and many believed that it was a distribution of Confederate lands under a new name. Their eyes beamed with anticipation and anxiety; and after their names were taken, they went on their way rejoicing. On election day, expecting to reap the benefits of reconstruction, the freedmen frequently appeared at the polls with great sacks —"to put the franchise in!" Aff airs in South Carolina were not peculiar to that state:

The white citizen, dazed with a sudden apprehension of his stripped and bereft condition, when the end came, turned only to behold the extraordinary transformation of his bondmen. The slave had suddenly acquired his freedom, and with that the right to vote and hold office. The enfranchised negroes were a majority in three quarters of the counties in the state. They all at once gathered at the polls, chose themselves to office, and under slight guidance became its rulers and governors. Amazed at the sudden change, stunned by this blow at their pride and power, the whites looked around to see if all was a hideous dream. They found the movement backed by United States bayonets, and then they knew it was a ghastly reality. The civilized and educated white race was under foot, prostrate and powerless, while the black barbarian reigned in its stead.

Registration of voters in ten states under Congress' plan showed that in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi,

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82 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 156.
83 James S. Pike, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
and South Carolina, the colored voters were in a majority. In Georgia, blacks and whites were about equal in number; and in Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas, one-third or more of the registered voters were colored. Thus, by an enforced impotence of the natural leaders of the South, the preponderance of the voting power was in the hands of a people just out of slavery. And yet this very fact met with the approval of the radical policy --- in fact, was engendered by it:

The logical, the necessary ultimate step in the negro's elevation to full manhood is his possession of the vote. By far the most desirable road to this consummation would be a gradual and educational introduction of the body of freedmen to the franchise. But toward such a course the South shows no inclination. The alternative remains --- in the brief period during which the national authority can be applied to organic reconstruction --- of establishing universal manhood suffrage; with the drawback of a present admixture of a large ignorant and unfit element; with the great disadvantage, too, of further alienating the two races for the present; but with the possibility and hope that the exercise of the ballot will in itself prove educational, and that the Southern white man and Southern negro will ultimately fare better than if the one is allowed to permanently disfranchise the other.

To the man of the North, the convincing argument for Negro suffrage was that the ballot would give the black man "the necessary weapon for self-protection" --- from state law and from personal abuse. In assuming this view, the North leaped to the conclusion that the freedman and his former master were, and were to remain, natural enemies.

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84 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 311.
85 Ibid., pp. 309-310.
86 Ibid., p. 309.
Booker T. Washington voiced the opinion of many students of the problem, both North and South, when he intimated that his race had used the wrong procedure in attaining position and status:

In my mind there is no doubt we made the mistake at the beginning of our freedom by putting the emphasis on the wrong end. Politics and the holding of office were emphasized almost to the exclusion of every other interest, and we accepted responsibilities which our experience and education had not fitted us to perform with success and credit.87

Continually the radicals were giving evidence that they knew nothing of anthropology and sociology. Believing that every defect in the Negro was due to slavery, they argued that, remove bondage and supply education, and the Negro would soon be the equal in every way of the whites; this, despite the fact that no race had ever become civilized except by adopting the elements of progress in some other culture and developing them in its own way. But the radicals were eager to try a new feat --- forcing a people into civilization. "A people who had been faithful slaves for centuries, who had not even taken advantage of the war waged on their account to throw off the yoke, were now by one stroke to be made into citizens competent to wield the ballot."88

To the blacks doubtful benefits accrued through the sudden opening of political power and preferment. For the more

87William H. Skaggs, op. cit., pp. 119-120.
88Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 222.
promising, intelligent, and ambitious, it meant sudden and brilliant prizes instead of the gradual apprenticeship needed before the assumption of a new status. Few of those who rose quickly to office were by character and attainment really fitted for the respective positions: many won favor by shallow and questionable arts, others were thrown up like driftwood by the tide. As a body the Negroes were by nature fitted only to follow a personal leadership — "could be organized in bodies, attached to a party name and watchwords, and voted in mass by the men who had their confidence." They had been made to understand that freedom and the ballot had been given them by the North and by the Republican party, and to this party they naturally turned. "Their old masters — in many cases their best friends — frankly told them they were unfit to vote, and wanted no dealings with them in political affairs. So they found leadership principally in the men who had come from the North."89 These men studied the Negro's weaknesses and capitalized upon them — credulity, superstition, ignorance, simple-mindedness. The freedman's credulity was amazing — and the fruits thereof were disastrous.

Inspired, in the field of religion, to demand separate churches, the Negro was thrown upon his own resources to support them. As in politics, he had had no past experience in shaping his own religious life. Churches were the first so-

89 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 319.
cial institution fully controlled by black men in the United States,\textsuperscript{90} and it would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of this new responsibility which, largely through trial and error, developed in the freedmen the ability to care for their own affairs and interests. The movement for Negro churches was a natural accompaniment of the circumstances of the era: a desire to be free from restraint in religion as well as in other phases of life was evinced and accomplished.\textsuperscript{91}

With all things considered, the winning of religious independence by the Negro was perhaps the most momentous social accomplishment of the entire debacle of reconstruction. Not only was it a change in matters of the most intimate concern, but also the most clearly defined transformation that has remained permanent. Most of the political accomplishments of reconstruction have since been undone, but the Negro church goes forward as a singular race institution.\textsuperscript{92} Even to the present, the two races remain more rigidly separated in religion than in any other sphere.\textsuperscript{93}

The bubble of ephemeral equality, created by reconstruction, soon burst. New radical legislatures had continued the policies of the conventions in making the blacks and the whites equal:


\textsuperscript{91}Peter J. Hamilton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 456.

\textsuperscript{92}F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 395.

\textsuperscript{93}Ibid., p. 394.
Their children were to attend school in the same houses. The races were to ride side by side on railway trains, on steamboats, and in street cars. They were to sit at the same tables in restaurants and hotels, occupy adjoining seats in theatres. Hereafter no one should be called a "nigger," nor so much, indeed, as a "negro." New offices of various kinds were created that there might be the largest possible number of salaried posts for the Radical leaders and their henchmen.94

In many instances the equality craze was carried to extreme lengths, bearing its worst fruit in the rape and violation of womanhood, which crimes had been almost unknown in the old slave civilization, where women scarcely ever were unsafe with their servants. Now, however, unscrupulous and vile Northern whites were going through the country hinting that Southern women were none too good to mate with their ex-bondmen; and rape was advocated among the lowest Negroes --- those who would listen to such vile suggestion --- as a means of leveling caste and establishing equality. Outrages upon white womanhood became widespread --- another indication of social disruption, --- despite the custom of lynching utilized to counteract such social violence. Southern women feared to be alone.

The Northern press played up lynching as the "crime of the South," with little mention of the far worse crime that prompted it. Hence the Negroes, in their ignorance of social mores, felt that rape was not a crime.95

In most cases the Negro misused and perverted the power

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94 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., II, p. 327.
placed in his hand when he received the ballot, but the con-
demnation should rest not so much on him as on the white ad-
venturers who inspired him to seek social status and fired
him with the dream of equality and accomplishment in a white
man's land. These men were almost criminal in their desire
to convert the Negro into a political automaton on whose shoul-
ders they could ride into power and affluence. While attempt-
ing to convince the Negro that he should be wholly free so that
he might be a whole man and citizen, they were thinking more
of themselves than of the black man to whom they were posing
as savior and friend. Many of the excesses and social evils
of reconstruction and Negro rule germinated in this initial
act of deception. And the freedman, working first under their
tutelage and later without it, made for himself, through trial
and error and frequent questionable procedures, if not a posi-
tion of social equality, at least a more respected status
than he could soon have attained had he not, in the early days
of his freedom, possessed the ballot. For,

The political experience of the negro has been a
great education to him. In spite of his many blunders
and unintentional crimes against civilization, he is
today more of a man than he could have been had he not
been a voter.96

SOUTHERN PSYCHOLOGY DURING RECONSTRUCTION

Entering upon the threshold of reconstruction, the South-

96George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 367.
ern white had "nothing to regret but the dead and the failure." But he was in for a disillusionment. For when Congress, in February of 1867, thrust disfranchisement upon a South that had refused to accept the Fourteenth Amendment, the realization dawned upon thousands of the South's leaders that they were about to be "ushered into the limbo of forgotten men." Many had foreseen such a punishment, but thousands had obstinately tried to convince themselves that the North would never dare to impose such a penalty upon men who had given their all to a just, though unsuccessful, cause.

A shortage of men in the South added to the difficulties of reconstruction: the war had taken half of the military population, and most of those who remained were deprived of participation in government --- only the " slackers" and lukewarm patriots of the South could build back the desolation.

Former slaveholders did not hate the Negro, but they did not believe that he could rise much higher in the scale of civilization. Nor did they wish him to rise, and they therefore were indignant at the very thought of a possible political or social equality. Entertaining toward him a feeling of kindness and even of gratitude for his admirable conduct during the war, they would eventually have conferred upon the

97 W. T. Couch, ed., Culture in the South, p. 11.
100 James F. Rhodes, op. cit., V, pp. 559-560.
freed colored man full civil rights. But they resented its being done suddenly by aliens who came as much as exploiters as humanitarians. Whereas the Southerners desired that the attainment of economic and political freedom be through a gradual transition on the part of the freedman as he showed himself capable of assuming new and larger responsibilities, the Northerners wanted a complete and abrupt break with the old order, and the immediate establishment of the new in which white and black would be equal.101

Subjected to a second and more brutal conquest after having laid down its arms, the South felt outraged and grew sul¬len, looking upon the desolation of its country and the dic¬tation by a radical Congress as "high-handed and guilty usur¬pation."102

And carpetbaggers and scalawags were on the scene to execute the "usurpation" of Congress, sometimes by taking droves of Negroes from one county to another and even into other states, and voting them over and over in localities where a white plurality was feared. Or, the polling-place would be suddenly changed, and only the Negroes would be in¬formed. The whites might walk a mile to register, only to find the office closed. The Negroes, privately advised, had already registered and gone.103

103Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 287.
Welded into a solid political organization, the Southern Negroes presented a force against which their disfranchised masters were powerless. The old question of "What shall be done with the negro?" was superseded by a new one, pondered with uneasiness: "What will the negro do with us?"\textsuperscript{104}

When he saw how the registrations were going, the editor of the \textit{New Orleans Picayune} voiced the sentiment of countless white Southerners when he asked in his columns, "Where, in the name of heaven, is the ship of state drifting to?" Then he answered his own question: "Plainly, to Africa."\textsuperscript{105} The tragedy of the situation was that few Southerners at the moment could do anything toward redirecting the course of the ship of state, and had to resign her to the winds of fate --- and to carpetbaggers, scalawags, and Negroes, who were at the helm.

The grievance most profoundly felt in the reconstruction period was not unwise laws nor waste of public money nor oppressive taxes. It was the consciousness by the master class of political subjection to the servile class. It was the spectacle of rude blacks, yesterday picking cotton or driving mules, sitting in the legislators' seats and executive offices of Richmond and Columbia, holding places of power among the people of Lee and Calhoun.... Put this as the case of a people high-strung and sensitive, still fresh from the passion of war, still smarting from defeat. They had fought to exhaustion, and their banner had fallen without disgrace. Now the victors who had won by superiority of forces had placed their late bondmen as their rulers. The offices from which their own captains and chiefs were shut out were filled by plantation field hands.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{104}Ellis P. Oberholtzer, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{105}Ibid., II, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{106}George S. Merriam, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 321-322.
With the freedman's elevation to control of politics and government, or at least to a participation in them, began the nightmare of reconstruction, a carnival of pillage and corruption, of bribery and debauchery, with the leading whites deprived of the ballot in many states and the ignorant and illiterate Negroes, led by unscrupulous carpet-baggers and scalawags, in control.107

Looking at the situation from the basis of "sound political science," Burgess characterizes the imposition of universal Negro suffrage on the Southern communities as one of the "blunder-crimes" of the nineteenth century:

There is something natural in the subordination of an inferior race to a superior race, even to the point of the enslavement of the inferior race, but there is nothing natural in the opposite. It is entirely unnatural, ruinous, and utterly demoralizing and barbarizing to both races.108

Being fair-minded and generous, the advanced thinkers of the South did not regard the natural prospect of Negro voters with repugnance, for some declared that they knew many Negroes whom they would trust with the ballot, that the number would steadily increase, and that the Negroes would before long become voters under "certain qualifications." Lee declared that if it could be plain to Virginia that Negroes would vote "properly and understandingly, she might admit them to vote." Stephens, the Confederate vice-president, said that "individually" he would not be "opposed to a proper system of

107Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 154.
108John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 245.
restricted or limited suffrage" for the Negroes.109

The Southerners believed that the Northern agitation for Negro suffrage was but a hoax, a camouflage, of their true purpose in the South. To the Confederate, all the Republicans wanted with the freedman was to use him in lifting themselves into power, after which they would not care what became of him; and they would degrade the Southern whites below the Negro from sheer malice.110 Gideon Welles, from his vantage point in Washington, analyzed the situation and remarked: "Under the pretence of elevating the negroes the radicals are degrading the whites and debasing the elective franchise, bringing elections into contempt."111 In this process of degradation, "the very men whose work in the direction of conciliation was most urgently needed," were deprived of the right of participation in government,112 leaving the South a prey to usurpers, and attaining the two main purposes of disfranchisement: the punishment of the rebels, and preventing them from participating in the councils of the victors.113

Among the long-time results of radical disfranchisement were the following: (1) Southern political acumen was removed

110Ibid., VI, p. 186.
111Gideon Welles, op. cit., III, p. 102.
112J. G. Randall, op. cit., p. 739.
113William A. Russell, op. cit., p. 179.
from the stage, resulting in a prostitution of government in the Southern states, and a lower political tone in the national government; (2) the removal of old leaders made possible a temporary Republicanization of the South through a new electorate composed of freedmen, carpetbaggers, and scalawags; (3) the political disablement of the leading whites resulted in giving to the Negroes a temporary numerical majority in a number of the states; (4) disfranchisement had an important part in "creating a solid, anti-negro, anti-Republican, isolated, Democratic South because of the privations suffered by the whites during their forced vacation from politics."\textsuperscript{114}

Of utmost importance in the South was the fact that the class of whites who paid 99\% of all the taxes\textsuperscript{115} was sharply distinct, politically and economically, from the class that levied them; and, according to radical reconstructionists, was to be definitely excluded from an active voice in the government that it paid for and that other people administered.\textsuperscript{116} Taxes were exorbitantly high; they had to be if the odious system of corruption, bribery, and vote-buying was to persist. Proud delicate women were reported seen selling provisions needed at home for their children, in order to pay their taxes; and throughout the South thousands of whites were losing lands and city property through inability to pay

\begin{footnotes}
\item[114] William A. Russ, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 180.
\item[115] J. W. Garner and H. C. Lodge, \emph{op. cit.}, IV, p. 1421.
\item[116] William A. Dunning, \emph{Reconstruction, Political and Economic}, p. 206.
\end{footnotes}
the taxes. Reports and announcements of sheriff's sales came to be features of certain newspapers, especially in South Carolina, the state most inextricably held in the coils of unscrupulous reconstructionists.117

Even in religion radicalism exerted its influence. As the Federals occupied Southern territory, they decreed that Southern preachers might remain to minister to their distressed people only if they would agree to conduct "loyal services, pray for the President of the United States, and for Federal victories." Sometimes members of the congregations showed resentment at these "loyal" prayers by leaving. But in spite of many irritations, both sides managed often to get amusement out of the "loyal" services.118 Federal officers appearing at the services to see whether prayer was offered for the President might always see many members standing unbowed to indicate their resentment. On one occasion a group of sisters, all with turned-up noses, attending a service, remained unbowed and caused the officer present to report: "Not only do they stand up when the President is prayed for, but they turn up their noses." The girls, hearing of the report, wrote the officer a note, saying: "A mightier power than the Yankee Army turned up our noses!"119

119Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 129.
For two-thirds of its existence, the South's politicians and statesmen had controlled the government at Washington. During her ante-bellum days she had raised slaves, cotton, and gentlemen of leisure; the "poor whites" were, and still remained, a negligible factor in government. During the latter part of the reconstruction era, the aristocratic oligarchy proved itself just as much in control as before the war, but, being disfranchised, had to seek out some avenue other than the political through which to work its ends and regain its position at the head of affairs. The ingenious Ku Klux movement was destined to provide this means.

In all the South, from the Carolinas to Texas and from Mississippi to Kentucky, the Federal Government used its authority to redefine the relation of the Southern states to the Union and to establish "loyal" state governments based upon an electorate composed chiefly of freedmen, of carpetbaggers from the North, and of those comparatively few Southern men who could swear to the "iron-clad oath" that they had not in any way participated in rebellion. The principles of reconstruction as carried out in the South originated in the ranks of the radicals in Washington. Passed in the main over the President's veto, the reconstruction measures were executed by government agents in every Southern state. The harshness of these measures and the rigidity with which they were enforced were unnecessary and in most instances unjustifiable. Whether intentionally or not, they operated to subordinate and to incapacitate, politically,

\[120\text{Don C. Seitz, op. cit., p. 29.}\]
most of the leaders of the Old South. The freedmen, suddenly endowed with political power and with a legal status equal and often superior to that of their former masters, were the political enigmas of the reconstruction era. Given political voice, they were encouraged—sometimes forced—to use it to the advantage of those who had bestowed it. Receiving a heritage of powers with whose use and meaning they were, as a class, wholly unacquainted, the freedmen turned to those who had liberated them in search of leadership and guidance in an unfamiliar maze of registrations, ballots, political caucuses, and offices. Consequently, the most of them became mere puppets in the hands of political manipulators; and when some of them acquired the political intelligence to dare to vote independently or with their former masters, they became immediately unpopular.

The freedmen had literally been pushed into politics; in the beginning few of them had desired the ballot and its attendant powers, but their Northern champions gave them the franchise and instructed them in its use—to their own advantage, largely. The results were not altogether laudable, for the freedmen had come too soon into possession of the ballot.

Of all the unpleasant features of reconstruction, the most unendurable to the aristocratic whites of the South was that of being subjected in part to the rule of their former bondmen; and the "poor whites" likewise resented the aspiration of the blacks to places of power that they themselves had seldom known.
The social implications of political reconstruction were many and varied, but chief among them, perhaps, was one that was all-comprehending: the degradation from influence and political power of the former Southern aristocracy, and the rise of a new and unlettered class to a place of prominence, thus completely disrupting the social and political systems that had been partially torn asunder with the emancipation of the slaves. It was the transition of the ballot from one hand to another that, more than anything else, rent in twain the old social system and precipitated chaos. And it was to be the misuse of the ballot in the hands of the inexperienced that, in the end, wrought the return of the Southern aristocrat to the seat of power.
CHAPTER V

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRIFE

Characterized by groups and organizations struggling for advantage, the reconstruction era was perhaps the greatest "cesspool of corruption" in all the history of the United States, from which sprang unscrupulous individuals and unprincipled characters who capitalized on the "chaos and anarchy that went under the name of Reconstruction in the South."2

The social, economic, and political conflict of the period produced the carpetbagger, the scalawag, the Negro ruler, and the exploiter, partly each by himself and partly together. These three human factors in reconstruction hurled themselves, either consciously or unconsciously, into "radical collision with all that was most solid, intelligent and moral in Southern society."3

During a part of the orgy of reconstruction, the South was afflicted with triune government: state governments, based on the sovereignty of the people of character, intelligence, and property; the Freedmen's Bureau, that protected

1John L. Hall, op. cit., p. 281.


3E. Benjamin Andrews, The United States in Our Own Time, p. 114.
the rights of the freedmen; and the military occupation, that placed a restraining hand on all phases of governmental administration.\textsuperscript{4}

Thus, with three governments, and with three distinct human factors as embodiments of reconstruction in the South, conflict and strife were inevitable.

CARPETBAGGERS AND SCALAWAGS

At the close of the war, the South was almost a \textit{tabula rasa} upon which might be constructed a new society. On the other hand, there were many in the North who saw opportunities for economic profit and political advancement in the defeated region. Hardly had the last musket been stacked when there came a horde of adventurers into the Southern States.\textsuperscript{5}

These men were thus described by a Southern planter:

After the fighting there came upon us from the North some misty and honest dreamers, some sincere fanatics, many camp followers, plunderers, and adventurers, villainously intent on the robbery of a rich land and a helpless and crushed people, with legislatures composed of cornfield Negroes and controlled by the scum of the armies and the bright criminals of many Northern communities.\textsuperscript{6}

Another writer has given this caustic description:

A host of vagrant political adventurers from the North, known in America as carpet-baggers, poured into the Southern provinces, and, in company with the refuse of the mean whites, they undertook the direction of the

\textsuperscript{4}James F. Rhodes, \textit{op. cit.}, VI, pp. 27-28.

\textsuperscript{5}W. B. Hesseltine, \textit{A History of the South}, p. 578.

\textsuperscript{6}Emory Q. Hawk, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 433.
Negro votes. Then followed, under the protection of the Northern bayonets, a grotesque parody of government, a hideous orgy of anarchy, violence, unrestrained corruption, undisguised ostentation, insulting robbery, such as the world had scarcely ever seen.  

The carpetbagger was the all-important figure in Dixie after the war; he was ruler of the Southern domain. He incited discord between the races, kept up war between the section, and created riots and published the stories of them, laying all the blame on the Southern whites. Neither he nor the turn-coat Southerner who was his running-mate was accepted socially; but sentence fell harder upon the scalawag when old friends insulted him and his family was ostracized and ignored.

Many of the carpetbaggers were undoubtedly men of personal honesty and integrity, but these had to bear the odium of those coming South solely for the purpose of peculation and plunder. The charge that they were all thieves and plunderers had no foundation in fact. But at the same time it is unquestioned that, as a class, they unnecessarily multiplied the burdens of the Southern people, did not exhibit an over-delicacy in their desire for the emoluments of office, and by their alliance with Negroes against the whites, finally brought on revolution and reaction — the final fruition of the Congressional policy of reconstruction. Some of them considered that

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8 Myrta L. Avary, *op. cit.* , p. 325.
the war had opened all doors to them, hence they openly expressed their views, gave advice freely, condemned old customs, were generally offensive, and did much to bring all Northerners into disrepute.\textsuperscript{10}

There grew up in the South a popular definition of a carpetbagger that described him as a "Yankee, in a linen duster and with a carpetbag, appearing suddenly on a political platform in the South, and calling upon the Negroes to vote him into office."\textsuperscript{11} They were considered as "strangers to the interests and aliens to the sympathies of those they governed."\textsuperscript{12}

Many of the Northern immigrants, hoping to profit from the high price of cotton, had seized abandoned plantations and had attempted the cultivation of that staple, but few of them were successful. Entering the political arena, they observed such perfect fraternization with the Negroes that they drank whiskey from the same bottle, some of their wives played the piano for the amusement of their sable sisters, and at Negro picnics carpetbaggers mingled with Negro men and danced with Negro women --- all for mere political advantage!\textsuperscript{13}

The scalawag, in collusion with the carpetbagger, controlled the Freedmen's Bureau and the Union Leagues. In the main, he was from the scum of Southern society --- one who

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{10}Walter L. Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 414. \\
\textsuperscript{11}Myrta L. Avary, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 326. \\
\textsuperscript{12}William H. Trescot, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 276. \\
\end{flushright}
could take the oath of allegiance, either truthfully or by perjuring his word. Oberholtzer describes him well:

... viler yet were the blatant, vindictive, unprincipled characters gathered up from the South itself who, cloaking themselves in a pretense of "loyalty" to the Union, took up the task of winning office in the reorganized states by base and hypocritical appeals to the new voters. For the most part these men were turncoats. They had been small slaveholders, and seditionists. But, failing on the rebel side to gain the prominence they craved, they had gone North to sell their tongues to the Republicans, while the war still had not come to an end, or, if not this, were now ready to do so. Such men came to be known to the Southern people as "scalawags."  

For a decade the Northerners and their allies were "absolute masters of the situation" in Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas, and the Carolinas; in Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee their grip was less firm but nevertheless powerful, whereas in Texas and Virginia they accomplished comparatively little.  

Albeit the Negroes constituted the majority of the electorate, their power actually gave them little advantage. Multitudes of adventurers were always at hand to cozen, beguile, and use them; gaining the Negro's confidence, they became his new masters, took over the most lucrative officers, and lived upon the treasury, contracts, and the easy manipulation of affairs of state. Their Negro henchmen got only occasional allotments of abandoned or forfeited land, the remuneration

from petty offices, the wages of domestic servants, and the scant proceeds of bribery. They were made easy dupes by their ignorance and credulity: any petty favor, small stipend, trifling perquisite, bit of poor land, or piece of money, satisfied and silenced them, and afforded an opportunity to play upon their fervent passions. They could easily be taught to hate the men who once had held them in slavery, and without difficulty were persuaded to follow blindly the political party which had brought on the war of their emancipation.\textsuperscript{17}

At times discord, strife, and contention prevailed among the ranks even of the radicals themselves: carpetbaggers were aligned against scalawags, and both against the Negroes. As a result of this situation, legislation giving the Negroes equal rights in hotels, places of amusement, and common carriers, was often introduced by the carpetbaggers to rid the radical ranks of certain scalawags who were unalterably opposed to such measures.\textsuperscript{18}

Thomas Nelson Page, after having made "a survey of the field and a careful consideration of the facts," reached the conclusion that the Southern states, with the possible exception of one or two, had been "better off" in 1868 at the beginning of reconstruction than they were in 1876, when the

\textsuperscript{17}Woodrow Wilson, \textit{A History of the American People}, V, p. 46.

\textsuperscript{18}Walter I. Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 275-276.
carpetbag governments were finally overthrown; and that Negro domination had cost the South more than the entire cost of the war, inclusive of the loss of values in slave property.19

Undoubtedly, with the coming of the carpetbagger into the South as the embodiment and agent of radical reconstruction, a period of darkness settled upon the unhappy Southern people blacker and more hopeless than had been the war's worst horrors. The conduct of the men now on the scene was "tyrannic, corrupt, mean, and vulgar."20

THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

The Freedmen's Bureau was a government put over the defeated South by the victorious North.21 It was a method devised for regulating the conduct of the planters toward the freedmen, whom it attempted to rehabilitate in the disrupted social and economic order. It was an outgrowth of the ideas held by the Negroes and by men from the North:

They had dreamed that the blue-coated armies which stormed slowly southward were bringing them not only freedom, but largess of fortune as well; ... The government would find land for them, would feed them and give them clothes. It would find work for them, but it did not seem to matter whether work was found or not; they would be taken care of. They had the easy faith, the idle hopes, the inexperience, of children. Their master-

19 Thomas N. Page, The Old South, p. 333.
20 John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 246.
less, homeless freedom made them the more pitiable, the more dependent, because under slavery they had been shielded, the weak and incompetent with the strong and capable; had never learned independence or the rough buffets of freedom.22

A widespread feeling that the freedman had become in many respects the ward of the nation was responsible for the creation of the Bureau early in 1865.23 Originally intended to operate throughout the duration of the war and for a year thereafter, it was later reorganized over the President's veto and given an existence that ended only with the conclusion of radical reconstruction in the South. Ending as each state was released from military rule, the Bureau in its short life made valiant efforts to rehabilitate the Negroes — it encouraged them to work the land, it parcelled out Confederate property to the freedmen until the President's amnesty policy interfered, and helped them to make contracts as agricultural laborers.24

Designed to come to the freedmen's immediate aid by looking after the refugees, by distributing food and clothing to the needy, and by allocating confiscated lands to the Negroes, the Bureau evaded the larger question of how the Negro was permanently to make a living, and left it for time to solve.

The Bureau administered relief to both races, regulated Negro labor and the making of contracts, guaranteed justice to

23Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 105.
the freedmen in the courts, managed abandoned and confiscated lands, established and maintained schools for the Negroes, provided the freedmen with a minimum of land and capital, and maintained hospitals for both races.\textsuperscript{25}

The Bureau made, interpreted, and executed laws; laid and collected taxes; "defined and punished crime, maintained and used military force and dictated such measures as it thought necessary and proper for the accomplishment of its varied ends."\textsuperscript{26} It established during its existence 4,239 schools in the South for Negro pupils, in which 9,307 teachers were employed, and 247,333 students learned the "three R's", coupled with Latin and Greek. Du Bois believed that the Bureau was of real benefit, especially in respect to its efforts toward helping the Negro to become adjusted to his new surroundings through education and the encouragement of labor.\textsuperscript{27}

At every turn, two great obstacles confronted the officers of the Freedmen's Bureau: (1) the tyrant, in the person of the former slaveholder, who believed that slavery was right, and was determined to perpetuate it under another name; and (2) the idler, the freedman, who regarded freedom as perpetual rest.\textsuperscript{28} Rightly handled, there could have been a ready

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27] Benjamin Brawley, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 126.
\end{footnotes}
adjustment of the changed relation of Southern capital and labor brought on by the war and emancipation — provided the Negro would work and the white man would be fair.\textsuperscript{29} It was to this thorny problem that the Bureau turned its best efforts.

Contracts sponsored for the freedmen by the Bureau must be for at least three months, and must secure the just treatment of the laborer, wholesome food, comfortable clothing, sanitary quarters, fuel, and medical attention, in addition to wages ranging from five to ten dollars a month.\textsuperscript{30}

Carl Schurz found the Freedmen's Bureau to be unpopular in most sections of the South because it was a barrier to reactionary aspirations. Admitting that elements of mismanagement and abuse existed in the Bureau's affairs, he nevertheless felt "warranted in saying that not half of the labor that had been done in the South this year or will be done there next year would have been or would be done but for the exertions of the Freedmen's Bureau."\textsuperscript{31} Continuing the same line of thought, he declared: "No other agency, except one placed there by the national government, could have wielded the moral power whose interposition was so necessary to prevent the Southern society from falling at once into the chaos of a general collision between its different elements."\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29}Peter J. Hamilton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., pp. 107-108.
\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., p. 122.
\textsuperscript{32}W. E. B. Du Bois, \textit{The Gift of Black Folk}, p. 201.
Trowbridge, observing conditions in the South a year after the Freedmen's Bureau had been set in operation, found commendatory words for that organization's efforts and indicated general directions for future endeavor:

The freedmen are fast learning the responsibilities of their new situation, and gaining a position from which they cannot easily be displaced. Their eagerness to acquire knowledge is a bright sign of hope for their future. By degrees the dominant class must learn to respect those who, as chattels, could only be despised. Respect for labor rises with the condition of the laborer. The whites of the South are not by choice ignorant or unjust, but circumstances have made them so. Teach them that the laborer is a man, and that labor is manly, --- a truth that is now dawning upon them, --- and the necessity of mediation between the two races will no longer exist.33

Shortly after its establishment, the agents of the Bureau had dispersed themselves throughout the South, "filling the holes and crevices of society."34 As a class, the agents were not competent to guide the blacks in the ways of liberty or to arbitrate the differences between the races. Of course, there were many exceptions to this general statement, but unfortunately the Southern view as expressed by Wade Hampton had only too much foundation in fact: "There may be an honest man connected with the Bureau."35

Upon occasion, certain agents of the Bureau were glad to use their extensive powers for the utter humiliation of the Southern white men with whom they dealt.36 To such an extent

33J. T. Trowbridge, op. cit., p. 590.
34William H. Trescot, op. cit., p. 275.
was this true that the agency's efficiency depended upon the personality and character of the agent in charge:

If he were discreet and self-respecting, its influence was wholesome; if he were the reverse, it was a curse. If he were inclined to peculate, the agency gave opportunity; if he were cruel -- well, negroes who were hung up by the thumbs, or well anointed with molasses and tied out where flies could find them had opinions.37

Sometimes Bureau agents wandered over the plantations, seeking out the Negroes in their cabins and halting them at their labor in the fields, and the simple-minded freedmen were easy victms of their guile. One officer of the Freedmen's Bureau assembled a number of Negroes behind closed doors in one of the plantation cabins and informed them that the government required their enrollment in political clubs --- Union Leagues. Thus the agents made no scruples against employing coercion to build up the party organization on government time and money.38 Some of them erected personal machines, spreading the belief that the Democrats desired to restore slavery. Generally these men were not natives of the South and possessed no stake in the Southern communities in which they were stationed, hence they lined their own pockets and earned the unkind sobriquet of "carpetbaggers."39

There were Bureau agents who, through a mistaken notion of kindness to the blacks, destroyed the confidence that

37Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 211.
38Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 198.
39Frederic L. Paxson, op. cit., p. 43.
should have existed between the freedmen and the planters who were trying to give free labor an impartial trial.40 These individuals spread discord by telling the Negroes that they should not work for their former masters — that their freedom was not secure so long as they remained on the old plantations.41 Thus in some sections its agents defeated the purpose of the Bureau — to keep the Negroes contentedly at work.

One of the chief bones of contention was the belief, commonly circulated among the freedmen, that the government intended to give each of them "forty acres and a mule," the land to be provided from the possessions of their old masters. "When is de land goin' fur to be dewided?" asked the country blacks of Sidney Andrews. One old darkey would not accompany his fellows who believed that the blessings of freedom were available only near the Federal army and hence were going to Charleston, because, said he, "De home-house might come to me, ye see, sah, in de dewision."42 According to General Grant, "the effect of the belief in the division of lands is idleness and accumulation in towns and cities."43

At the height of its power the Bureau held only about 800,000 acres of abandoned or confiscated land, and some 1,500 town lots; and possible not more than one-fifth of one percent

40 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 112.
41 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 118.
42 James F. Rhodes, op. cit., V, p. 557.
of Southern land was ever in the possession or control of the
Bureau --- less than enough to provide an acre for every col-
ored family.\textsuperscript{44} The Bureau's policy of land distribution was
"the beginning of an effort to create of homeless and landless
laborers a class of peasants, renting land with the hope of
owning it in the future."\textsuperscript{45} But the amnesty proclamations
carried with them the restoration of all confiscated lands ex-
cept those sold for taxes, and, naturally, there was much bit-
terness among the Negroes who had succeeded in having lands
consigned to them when that land was returned to its pardoned
owners. Since the government had never committed itself to a
policy of permanent land confiscation, the primary reason for
the seizures was to provide temporarily for the refugees who
could be disposed of in no other way during the emergency.
It was extremely unfortunate that the blacks and certain gov-
ernment agents should have given these actions such broad in-
terpretations.\textsuperscript{46}

Because of restoration of much of the land, the oppor-
tunity to create a landed peasantry by government was lost,
and the Negroes had to begin their new life without land un-
less it was purchased at private sales, toward which purchase
the government made no attempt to lend money. Often, even
when the prospective black purchaser possessed the ready cash,

\textsuperscript{44}Peter J. Hamilton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 408-409.
\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 408.
\textsuperscript{46}B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 229-231.
the whites would refuse to sell land to him, as they did not want Negro neighbors. Thus most of the freedmen were forced by circumstance to become tenants or share-croppers.\textsuperscript{47}

The relief work of the Bureau consisted mainly in caring for the sick Negroes in reach of the hospitals, furnishing food and sometimes clothing and shelter to destitute blacks and whites, and transporting refugees of both races back to their homes. A hundred hospitals and clinics were established, and half a million patients treated. The issue of supplies in huge quantities brought much needed relief and a certain amount of demoralization. The Bureau claimed little credit --- and seldom is given any --- for keeping alive during the fall and winter of 1865-66 thousands of destitute whites; more than a third of all the food distributed went to whites.\textsuperscript{48}

Oberholtzer gives a pathetic picture of a white bread line in Atlanta:

\begin{quote}
Five had been smothered or trampled on in the crowds. Many were poor, wild creatures from the wood, dressed in coarse, dirty, homespun cloth, pictures of wretchedness and squalor. Ladies from once comfortable homes, whose wants were not less real, looked on at the struggling mob. Men with small carts, each drawn by an ox, stood by also. One said that he had come here four times for food, but that yet he had received nothing. He and his wife had been subsisting on wheat bran for five days. "God help us," he cried, "or we shall die." Another was the owner of 300 acres of land; he had had five slaves. They, as well as members of his family, would starve unless they could be supplied with food from the ration house.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47}Peter J. Hamilton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 409-410.

\textsuperscript{48}Walter L. Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 107-108.

\textsuperscript{49}Ellis P. Oberholtzer, \textit{op. cit.}, I, pp. 66-67.
Many freedmen, removed from the protection of their masters, were exposed to destitution and many forms of suffering. But for the help of the government, there was serious danger that thousands would starve. After having assumed the responsibility for emancipating the Negroes, it would have been an ineradicable reproach to the government had it not protected and provided for those in want, who could not be left to the chance almsgiver for subsistence: there were too many in want, and almsgivers were too few. And, besides,

The white population of the South were themselves reduced almost to poverty by the long struggle; and even if they had been able they were in no mood to extend relief to negroes who, as they believed, had been wrongfully released from slavery.50

The Bureau's ration houses tended to encourage idleness and shiftlessness among the Negroes. One case is on record of a freedman who walked a hundred miles to receive half a bushel of corn from the Bureau, whereas by honest effort he could have earned nine times the value of the corn in the time that had been required to go for it.51 Northern soldiers thought it a delightful jest to play upon the Negro's credulity and send him tramping away on all kinds of preposterous errands. Hence it was common to find, at the Bureau's ration houses, a disappointed freedman who had walked fifty or one hundred miles to get a barrel of flour sent to him by the Queen

50 James G. Blaine, op. cit., II, p. 163.
of England, or a free railroad ticket to Washington to see the President. 52

The Bureau courts did good in individual cases, but the agents were frequently men of bad character, and judicial power was gradually diverted to the opposition and oppression of the Southern whites rather than to the benefit of the blacks. Agents interfered in trivial matters, were a perpetual source of annoyance to the whites without ultimately being much benefit to the Negroes. The Bureau courts tended to become centers simply for the punishment of whites who were unsympathetic with the radical program. 53 For one thing, the army and the Bureau saw to it that the "black codes" were not enforced, suspending their operations against the Negro as long as these Federal agencies retained influence in the South. Most of the states were forced to repeal or abandon these codes under carpetbag rule. 54

In summary of the accomplishments of the Freedmen's Bureau, it may be said that,

It was typical of reconstruction politics that the real merits of the freedmen's bureau were marred by the excesses of its actual administration; and it may be added that the whole career of the bureau was a mixture of welfare and abuse, of genuine service and shameful corruption. Operating under the war department, the bureau had an elaborate organization in every Southern state, and its work was of a varied character. Food and supplies were furnished to blacks and needy whites. Employment was found for former slaves. The bureau supervised labor

52 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., I, p. 86.
53 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 416.
54 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 97.
contracts entered into by freedmen, established them on public lands under the homestead law, fixed their wages and terms of employment, and provided transportation to new-found homes. Colonies of Negroes were sometimes formed; hospital service was extended; schools were widely established. Care was taken by the Bureau to obtain justice for the Negro and to protect him from discrimination as to civil rights in Southern communities. Its relief and educational activities were of real importance in a period when certain groups known as "Jay-hawkers," "Regulators," and "Black-horse Cavalry" were striking terror to Negro hearts.55

THE UNION LEAGUES

Left to themselves, the freedmen would undoubtedly have turned for leadership to the native whites, who understood them best. This, to the radicals, power-crazed and unscrupulous, was the danger. It was imperative, then, that the blacks should be taught to hate --- and teachers of hate were plentiful!56

Most of the ex-slaves were willing to remain quiet during the turbulence of reconstruction, but the carpetbaggers and ambitious Southern scalawags tried to arouse them against the planters. One method was by the formation of "Union Leagues," secret political societies mainly of Negroes who became members by taking an oath to support the new political order. These leagues practiced a certain amount of violence against the masters, burning houses and barns, stealing personal property, and even waylaying white men for purposes of assault.

In the latter days of reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan was to

56 Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 198.
prove an effective means of counteracting this organization. 57

Meeting at night in some out-of-the-way place, where the membership were harangued by white Republican speakers, these organizations remarkably solidified the black vote. A league grew up in almost every Southern community, and a vast majority of the colored men were coerced into membership. 58

Meetings were held at midnight in churches and school houses, in deserted barns, in half-burnt buildings, or, perhaps, in the woods around brush fires, where by incantation and recourse to African fetishism the negroes became ready victims of the Radical leaders. 59

Union League methods resembled those of the Ku Klux Klan, its ultimate destroyer: anonymous warnings to obnoxious persons, houses burned, notices posted at night in public places and on houses of those incurring the hostility of the order. To destroy the influence of the whites where kindly relations still persisted, the local league issued "exodus orders" directing all members to leave the community and seek work elsewhere. None dared refuse. 60

Often, after having had military drill at the league meetings, the Negroes would march home along the country roads, shouting, firing their guns, and making boasts and threats against disliked persons. These midnight marches developed into military daytime parades, in which several hundred Negroes

57 Emory Q. Hawk, _op. cit._, p. 443.
58 James W. Garner, _Reconstruction in Mississippi_, p. 338.
60 Walter L. Fleming, _op. cit._, p. 191.
would march up and down the streets or country roads, abusing whites and shoving them off the walks or out of the road. Although little actual violence was ever perpetrated, the whites were sometimes very alarmed. That outrages were few was due, not to their leaders' sensible teachings, but to the fundamental good nature of the blacks, who were usually content with mere impudence.\(^6\)

The influence of the leagues over the Negroes was largely due to the mysterious secrecy of the meetings; and the weird initiation ceremony made them feel exultant from their head to their heels after having been conducted through a most imposing ritual. The emblems of the order were explained: an altar, the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the United States flag, a censer, a sword, a gavel, a ballot box, a sickle, a shuttle, an anvil, and other emblems of industry and patriotism. To the accompaniment of clanking chains and groans, the initiate was told the objects of the order: to preserve liberty, to perpetuate the Union, the maintenance of the laws and constitution, to secure the ascendancy of American institutions, to protect and defend all members of the League and all loyal men in all personal and property rights, to demand the elevation of labor, to aid in the education of laboring men, and to teach the duties of American citizenship. With a solemn oath he swore to support the principles of the Declaration of Independ-

ence, to pledge himself to resist all attempts to overthrow the United States, to strive for the maintenance of liberty, the elevation of labor, the education of all people in the duties of citizenship, to practice friendship and charity to all members of the order, and to support for election or appointment to office only such men as were supporters of these principles and measures.62

The freedman's pledge was, "to defend and perpetuate freedom and the Union, I pledge my life, my fortune, and my sacred honor, so help me God." The complex initiation ceremony was well-planned so as to be the most effective means of impressing and controlling the Negro through his mingled fear and love of secret, mysterious, midnight mummery. It was largely due to the impressiveness of the ceremony that he usually remained faithful to the order.

Wholesale intimidation was one of the methods employed by the Union Leagues: freedmen were made to understand that the death penalty was required of those voting the Democratic ticket. This, of course, immeasurably strengthened Republicanism in the South, as did the habit of some of the white organizers of the leagues of giving midnight warnings to the blacks that the native whites were their deadly enemies. And woe to the Negro who held back, remonstrated, was luke-warm, or who consulted the advice of his old master! He was taught that this was treason to his race and to his party. Persuasion failing, recourse was not infrequently had to the lash.63

By 1867 the Union Leagues had become strongly intrenched in the South as a powerful instrument of control in the organization of the blacks for radical Republicanism. Every member was oath-bound to vote for the nominees endorsed by the League. One member even admitted that the organization existed "for no other purpose than to carry the elections." Through its ritualistic grasp upon their simple minds, the League had remarkable success in capturing and delivering the Negro vote, voting the freedmen "like herds of senseless cattle."64

As a race, the Negroes moved into the Union Leagues, to the disgust and apprehension of the Southern whites, until fully nine-tenths of them were finally enrolled --- "oath-bound, impervious to reason, race-conscious, dreaming of domination."65

SOUTHERN EDUCATION DURING RECONSTRUCTION

Northern educators considered the need for schools in the South a fair field for missionary endeavors. The Southern aristocrats' opposition to free schools had been so emphasized in Northern war propaganda that it had come to seem the duty of the victors to force public education upon the conquered section. Even before the war, public schools in the South had been rudimentary, and free education had borne the taint of

64 J. G. Randall, op. cit., p. 848.
pauperism. Now, after the war, little remained of the South's educational system save here and there the charred remains of a one-time cabin-schoolhouse.66

The Freedmen's Bureau was the first organization to undertake a rehabilitation of the demolished educational system of the South, with its series of plantation schools, which served the purpose well until something better could be had. Planters furnished the schoolhouses, usually log cabins, and Northern benevolent societies supplied the teachers. A plantation with as many as one hundred fifty hands and forty or fifty children had its own schoolhouse, but smaller plantations would unite in constructing a schoolhouse in some central location, where the Negro children could easily go back and forth. For the planters soon learned that there was "nothing so encouraging and harmonizing to the freedmen as the establishment of schools for their children."67

The Negro school rose as the first expression of missionary activity on the part of Northern religious bodies. Seldom in the history of the world has an almost totally illiterate population been given the means of self-education in so short a time.

As to the intellectual backwardness of the South following the war, Knight has this to say:

... the so-called restoration period proved more destructive than the war itself. It robbed the South of what the

war had spared, and by looting treasuries and public funds, by imposing enormous taxes, by practicing fraud and extravagance, and by piling up colossal bonded debts it succeeded in running its corrupt fingers deep "into the pockets of posterity," and left in those States, already reduced to penury by the terrors of war, a debt of more than $300,000,000. Thus many of the richest portions of the South were wasted and shorn of their prosperity; industry was checked in its development; idleness and fraud were widely encouraged; local justice was thwarted and put in contempt; the people were ruled by corrupt and reckless officials, and almost all tendencies to good government were stifled. In this experience is the explanation of the South's educational backwardness following the war....68

Du Bois has pointed out four periods in the development of Negro education since the Civil War: (1) 1865-1876, uncertain groping and temporary relief, with army schools, mission schools, and Freedmen's Bureau schools in chaotic disarrangement; (2) a period of ten years of definite effort toward the establishment of complete school systems, with a fairly efficient system of normal schools and colleges training teachers for the public schools; (3) 1885-1895, the rise of the industrial school for the Negro, such as Hampton and Tuskegee; and (4) 1895 to the present, a full recognition in the South of the industrial school as the proper answer to a combined educational and economic crisis in the history of a race.69

Many Southern whites felt that the dreadful poverty into which the entire section had been plunged rendered impossible the education of the blacks, even if it was desirable; and

68Edgar W. Knight, op. cit., p. 307.
69Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., p. 132.
most of them questioned its desirability. Especially was this true of the lower class whites, who were beginning to recognize in the freedman an economic competitor. And, until the close of reconstruction, the South was overshadowed by a constant fear and dread that the radicals would demand the establishment of mixed schools. This one fact alone was one of the most nearly insurmountable obstacles in the way of public educational progress.

In the schools which he supported with the exorbitant taxes that he was obliged to pay, the Southern white man saw the children of his former slaves getting book-learning, which he deemed unwise, from strangers "who would be sure to train them into discontent with the only lot he thought them fit for and the only sort of work which, in the world he knew, they ever had a chance to do." Outside the schoolroom he saw the Union Leagues urging the freedmen to take up citizenly powers and duties which, when he had relinquished his sword, he had never understood emancipation to imply for them.

The progress of education for the Negro was not without opposition from the whites, many of whom were unfavorable toward education for the free black man. "Learning will spoil the Negro for work," they said; "Negro education would be the ruin of the South; the elevation of the blacks would be the

70 Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 166.
71 Edgar W. Knight, op. cit., p. 333.
degradation of the whites." And in a political application of these views, Negro schools were frequently broken up and the schoolhouses burned; in many places the schools were unsafe except under the immediate protection of Federal troops.73

The blacks early showed themselves very desirous of learning and enlightenment, and often to learn to read was one of the first uses to which they put their freedom. Travelers sometimes saw Negroes, who had in some learned to read, seated by the roadside teaching less enlightened relatives or friends the alphabet. In the first formal convention of the race in South Carolina, November of 1865, the delegates advocated the establishment of "good schools for the thorough education of our children,... since an educated and intelligent people can neither be held in nor reduced to slavery."74

For all their ignorance and folly, their rascality and venality, the black-and-tan legislatures of the reconstruction era performed much constructive service. The constitutions they framed were in almost every instance distinct improvements upon the previous documents; and though much of the school legislation was ineffective and ill-planned, it was these so-called travesties of legislative assemblies that finally established the principle of free public education for both white and black in the South.75

75James S. Pike, op. cit., preface, p. xiii.
Though at first they were steeped, like everything else, in corruption and characterized by inefficiency, the educational systems of the South remain as the most socially desirable contribution of the radical governments to the new Southern civilization created from the wreck of the old.\textsuperscript{76}

Whereas the blacks were the chief beneficiaries of the new educational systems of the various states, the whites paid the costs through taxation, even though considering the education of the Negro as carried on in the public schools to be either useless or even dangerous to society. To answer the Negroes' demands, schools were one of the chief items in the budgets of the reconstructed states.\textsuperscript{77} Thus the South, "with the gravest problems of our civilization challenging her existence and her peace, was expected to assume the task of the education of two populations (the black and the white) out of the poverty of one."\textsuperscript{78}

Hundreds of teachers --- "schoolmarms" --- came pouring down from the North to organize schools and teach the freedmen's children. Many of them possessed the highest character, were devoted and self-sacrificing, going to the blacks because their need was greater. But because they moved exclusively among the freedmen and ignored the needs of the whites, they incurred fierce opposition from the Southern whites, who in-

\textsuperscript{76} W. B. Hesseltine, \textit{A History of the South}, p. 625.


\textsuperscript{78} Virginius Dabney, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 178.
sulted the "nigger teachers" and frequently burned their schools. "The better social elements looked askance at those whose presence was a reminder of conquest and humiliation." Unless under the immediate protection of troops of the Federal Government, the teachers were usually driven out of the community, and their despised schools demolished bodily or fired.

Of all those who were victims of reconstruction, the white teachers of Negro schools comprised the class suffering most innocently, not violence, but in countless other ways whereby Southern society informed them that they were unwelcome and their mission disapproved. Since they associated constantly with the freedmen, they should not have expected kindly recognition from those who otherwise might have been their friends. Too often they not only disregarded, but even criticized and attacked, "those usages and traditions that gave to Southern life a charm and distinction not elsewhere found in America." Yet the South needed more of sympathy for what these teachers were trying to do; it needed a wise, candid study of the conditions of their work. Most of the teachers, unlike the political adventurers, came South not to use the Negro but to help him. The worst work performed by the Ku Klux Klan was its active opposition to Negro schools, and its

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79 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 320.
80 Carl Schurz, op. cit., III, p. 189.
occasional expulsion or even handling of their teachers.  

Yankee schoolmarms overran the country. Their spirit was often noble and high as far as the black man's elevation --- or their idea of it --- was concerned; but toward the white South, it was bitter, judicial, unrelenting. Some were saints seeking martyrdom, and finding it; some were fools; some, incendiaries; some, all three rolled into one; some were straight-out business women seeking good-paying jobs; some were educational sharps.

Teachers of Negro schools were unable to secure board and room in the homes of respectable white citizens, hence they usually had to lodge with their colored patrons; their living on terms of social equality with the blacks gave offense to the mind of the Southern white, and was sure to cost the offender whatever respect the community might otherwise have entertained for him. Too often the teacher's association with blacks was taken as an indication of loose moral character, when nothing of the kind was true, for the great majority of Northern men and women in the schoolrooms of the South were persons of high moral and intellectual character. In most cases their only offense was what the Southerner termed teaching the Negro "to struggle indecorously for the semblance of a non-existent equality."

One of the strongest arguments for the education of the Negro during reconstruction was that he should be enlightened.

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82 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 312.
83 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 359.
84 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 312.
so as to be able effectively to assume the role of intelligent voter and member of society. "If the negro is to vote and exercise the duties of a citizen, let him be educated to it. The measure (of universal Negro suffrage) should not, even if the government were empowered to act, be precipitated when he is stolidly ignorant and wholly unprepared."85

Many parents, especially among the whites, declared themselves too poor to send their children to the new public schools and pay the small tax assessed for each one; but those same parents smoked, chewed up, and spit away more than the means needful for the purposes of education. For them, "tobacco was a necessity of life; education wasn't."86

But many of the Negroes sacrificed almost beyond conception to enable their children to attend the schools. The superintendent of schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee, wrote: "The colored people are far more zealous in the cause of education than the whites. They will starve themselves, and go without clothes, in order to send their children to school."87

Something of the efficiency of Negro schools may be gleaned from the fact that in 1860 nine-tenths of the Negroes in the South were wholly illiterate; but in 1915, two-thirds of them could read and write,88 and by 1930, the percentage

85Gideon Welles, op. cit., II, p. 303.
87Ibid., p. 251.
of illiteracy among the Southern Negroes had been reduced to 16.3%.

Hereafter, it will be seen that negro suffrage was a boon to the race, not so much for a defense, but as a tremendous fact that compelled its education. There is nothing to do but attempt its education in every possible way. In their pinching poverty the Southern States have seized the question of negro education with a vigor that is the outcome of danger.

Thus wrote Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a witness of the reconstruction era and of its imprints made upon the character and accomplishments of the Southern Negro. Just as the acquisition of the ballot impelled Negro education, his rank in Southern society will depend, even more in the future, upon his acquisition of culture and his application of intelligence.

For almost a decade the deep South was a realm in which carpetbaggers and scalawags held sway. Some were efficient, thorough, and conscientious; but many, pretending to govern, created a state of anarchy. Distrust and antipathy were often manifest toward these men by all honorable elements of the Southern population without respect to social or economic prestige, who by them had been deprived of the right to govern their own land and to shape their own destinies. Both the carpetbaggers and the scalawags were products of the state of governmental anarchy that existed in some degree throughout the South as a result of political disruption and economic upheaval.

89 Encyclopedia Britannica, XII, p. 94.
90 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 367.
brought on by the South's defeat in the war. As the hand of authority was extended over the refractory South by the North, the Northern men who were government agents were confronted with attractive temptations to abuse their authority and to profit from the sad state of affairs in the old Confederacy. Some of the carpetbaggers did stoop to exploitation and fraud, while others went earnestly about the business of reconstructing the South in accordance with the dictates of their intelligence and the limitations of their ability.

The Freedmen's Bureau and the Union League were the agencies through which the Northern carpetbagger and the Southern scalawag favorably impressed the freedmen and cleverly influenced the Negro vote. An agency for the immediate relief of the freedmen, the Bureau represented the responsibility assumed by the Federal Government on behalf of four millions of people from whom it had just smitten the shackles of servitude and whom it was about to name citizens. While the Freedmen's Bureau was supplying their physical wants and assisting many of the liberated slaves to adjust themselves to the responsibilities of freedom, the local chapters of the Union League were marshalling the political powers of the blacks, with which they had been newly endowed, to the support of the Republican party. Thus the Freedmen's Bureau was designed as a charitable and philanthropic institution, whereas the Union League was almost wholly political in intent.

Mainly through the zeal of missionary endeavors on the
part of certain organizations in the North, the Negro was slowly given opportunity to slough off his illiteracy and to gain, through education, a more secure position in the esteem of the influential whites of the South. But at the same time the freedman encountered usually mild opposition from the lower ranks of "poor whites," who recognized in the educated free Negro no longer a slave but an economic competitor.
CHAPTER VI
"THE INVISIBLE EMPIRE"

For a decade the South suffered under radical rule; then, rising up and demanding control of her own affairs, devised cunning means whereby her territory was evacuated by those who had usurped the powers of government under the pretense of "reconstructing" her governments and rehabilitating her states in the Federal Union. After 1877, the South was to have power over her own destinies and control of her own fate. One of the first things she did was to attempt the undoing of certain evils of reconstruction, followed by a rehabilitation of social and economic life patterned after her own ideals.

ANARCHY

The South, oppressed and dominated by the agents of reconstruction, awoke at last to the necessity of striving to regain its freedom if it would save any remnant of its former culture, civilization, and political order from the obvious wreckage. The Southern people, being politically impotent, could not accomplish this purpose through legislation or balloting; but there must be a way! In seeking a medium through which to attain their rights, they began slowly to discover possibilities in secret societies that would indirect-
ly serve their purpose through preying upon the fears and superstitions of the colored electorate who, being frightened from the polls, would bring about the fall of the carpetbagger and the scalawag, who depended upon the freedman's votes to maintain them in power.

By secret societies waging its opening battle in the struggle for white supremacy, the South would ultimately return to the control of the responsible Southerners who had formerly guided its destinies; for these secret organizations were "in large measure the South's answer to the unscrupulous carpetbaggers and other thieves and demagogues who preyed upon the region for a decade after the war."¹ The men who went about in masks and robes were really the Confederate army, which under other names came forward in a determined effort to preserve the white civilization of the South.² Having failed on the battlefield in defending that civilization successfully, these men were now consolidating again for the purpose of salvaging it from the clutches of would-be destroyers. It was the old Confederate army which "flitted before the eyes of the people in this weird and midnight shape of a Ku Klux Klan."³

For the name "Ku Klux," although there were dozens of similar secret societies in the South, came to be applied to any group of masked riders who sought to rescue the whites

¹Virginius Dabney, op. cit., p. 163.
from Negro domination. Had it not been for the propertyless class from the North, without reputation or character at home, who came South to excite animosity and strife, the great South-wide Ku Klux movement could never have existed; there would have been no need for it.\footnote{Ellis P. Oberholtzer, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 357.} The terrible, fearful, corrupt, and tyrannical conditions which gave rise to it have been described in earlier sections of this account.

The Congressional reconstruction policy must bear the ultimate responsibility for Ku Klux disorders in the South, since it transposed political power from the hitherto dominant class to a race just emerging from the chrysalis of slavery, and thus conducted one of the most dangerous experiments ever undertaken by the law-makers of any country.

\begin{quote}
That such a policy could have been carried through, unattended by social and political disorders, especially in view of all the attending circumstances, no intelligent man will for a moment expect. History abounds with illustrations of the truth that the secret conclave, the league, and the conspiracy are the sequence of political proscription and disfranchisement.\footnote{James W. Garner, \textit{Reconstruction in Mississippi}, p. 353.}
\end{quote}

Sometimes bands of freedmen invaded a Southern home, captured and bound the men, and committed outrages upon the women while their men looked on in helpless agony, or else were killed outright. It was as much to escape from these lustful fiends as from the South’s sable rulers that the Ku Klux movement was organized.\footnote{Myrta L. Avary, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 267.}
Whereas the birth of the Ku Klux Klan was an accident, "its growth was a comedy, its death a tragedy.... There never was, before or since, a period of our history when such an order could have lived."  

That the Ku Klux movement had its background and origin in a maze of political anarchy, of social upheaval, of disordered society, and of a bewildered people, is unquestioned. It was too universal, too spontaneous, too clearly a popular movement to have originated with any one man or with any conspiracy of a few men. Had it existed in only one small corner of the South, or drawn its membership from a small and sharply defined class, such an explanation might suffice. "But we know enough of its extent, its composition, and the various forms it took, to feel sure that it was neither an accident nor a mere scheme. It was no man's contrivance, but an historical development."  

"It was anarchy; but self-preservation is the first law of nature."  

Growing out of a society in which lawlessness prevailed and militia attempted to keep order, the Ku Klux Klan and its kindred movements aimed at the substitution of a new and more effective type of anarchy for that already in existence. They were to use ghosts, goblins, robes, masks, and shrouded horses to save the property of the

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9John J. Hall, op. cit., p. 235.
South and to maintain its civilization -- not the old, aristocratic, ante-bellum civilization, but a new culture that was rapidly evolving from the wreck and chaos of the old.

ORIGIN OF THE KU KLUX MOVEMENT

On Christmas Eve, 1865, a group of six young men were gathered about the stove in a small law office in the town of Pulaski, Tennessee. Penniless, with poor prospects for the future, and surrounded by poverty and depression, they were discussing ways of having a livelier time, for in the general exhaustion and loss of enthusiasm prevalent throughout the South, they had more leisure than was good for them.

One of them said: "Boys, let's start something to break the monotony and cheer up our mothers and girls. Let's start a club of some kind." General enthusiasm was spontaneous, every one agreeing that some type of club for "diversion and amusement" would be most acceptable to all.

A few days later the same group of young men met to discuss further their proposed club. Suggestions as to its nature were made and discarded. But one or two ideas were unanimously accepted: since the object of the club was to be fun, why not have some sort of costume to deepen the mystery? So, during the next week, the fellows raided their mothers' linen closets and brought out sheets and pillow-cases. Then the next

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10 Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 306.
11 D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 399.
step was cheerfully accepted: why not ride horses disguised with sheets? Then we could ride into the black night, call mysteriously at the homes of parents and sweethearts in silent serenades! Thus it was that when the members of the new club first rode abroad, every one was merry for the moment, enjoying holiday pranks --- every one, that is, except the freedmen, who were sure that they had seen ghosts.\footnote{12}

A constitution with no very definite aims except recreation and amusement was drawn up in a spirit of fun, and names for the club were proposed and discussed. When someone pronounced the Greek word \textit{Kuklos}, meaning a circle, it seemed to grip the imagination of those present, and was adopted. Soon the name was carelessly shortened to "Ku Klux," and before long "Klan" had been tacked on for euphony's sake. That the name meant nothing whatever pertaining to the nature of the organization was a powerful recommendation, for it would challenge the interest and the imagination of all. No one then dreamed that six years later a Congressional committee would devote thirteen massive volumes to the history of a movement that began in a Pulaski law office and migrated later to a deserted and half-ruined house in the outskirts of the town. In its beginning, it was no movement at all --- simply a scheme for having fun, resembling any secret society among college students. Its members were not indigent or base fellows,

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\textit{op. cit.}, p. 306.
but young men of common standing who would have been men of wealth but for the war.13

After the Klan's first night ride, many idling blacks, who had seen "ghosts," hurried back to their master's fields, begging to be set to work, not because the "ghosts" had spoken, but because of a presentiment that they might be "after" the idlers. "At first the whites laughed over the fears of the blacks, and then, noting an improvement among them, with more industry and less petty pilfering, the serious possibilities of the society were envisaged."14

The constitution provided for a number of mysterious officers, chief among whom were the Grand Cyclops, or president; the Grand Magi, vice-president; the Grand Turk, marshal; the Grand Exchequer, treasurer; and two Lictors.15 It provided, also, that the chief source of fun and amusement was to be in the initiation of new members into the society, and set forth in detail the ceremonies to be followed.16 The initiate was led blindfolded through mysterious halls and rooms and over strange obstructions, taking numerous impressive oaths of secrecy and fidelity to the rules of the organization. At one point in the ceremony the still blindfolded candidate was ordered by the Grand Cyclops to be placed before the royal al-

15William G. Brown, ibid., p. 201.
16D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 401.
tar and adorned with the royal crown: the altar was a huge mirror, and the crown was a large hat bedecked with two enormous donkey ears. Standing before the throne, the initiate was made to repeat the words from Burns,

O wad some power the giftie gie us
To seeoursels as ithersee us!

At the last word, the bandage was removed, and the astonished candidate saw his own startling image in the mirror. The unearthly silence was then broken by uproarious and boisterous mirth from the mysterious company of hideously disguised men.\(^\text{17}\)

No member, under threat of expulsion, was permitted to divulge any of the secrets of the order, or to admit his membership, but he was free to talk openly about the "reputed" antics of the new society and thus indirectly solicit membership by telling his interested listener that he thought he knew how they could become members. On a given night they would approach the "den" together, but long before they had arrived, the Klan's outpost guard had met them and had blindfolded the candidate, who thought that his companion had been likewise confronted.\(^\text{18}\)

Something in the atmosphere of the initiation ceremony and of the regular meetings led to the common conclusion among those who joined the Klan that it contemplated some great and important mission; and its rapid expansion and growth in mem-

\(^{17}\text{D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 401.}\)

\(^{18}\text{Ibid., p. 401.}\)
bership seemed to confirm this belief; and, although the initiation rites implied nothing of the sort, they served to deepen rather than to dispel the impression:

There was not a word in the ritual, or in the obligation, or in any part of the ceremony, to favor it; but the impression still remained that this mysteriousness and secrecy, the high-sounding titles of the officers, the grotesque dress of the members, and the formidable obligation to profound secrecy, all meant more than mere sport. This conviction was ineradicable, and the attitude of many of its members continued to be that of expecting great developments. Each had his own speculations as to what was to be the character of the serious work which the Klan was to do. It was an unhealthy and dangerous state of mind; bad results very naturally followed from it.19

For the purpose of preserving the organization, and for the maintenance of strict secrecy, only men of good character and habits were admitted to membership; rash and imprudent persons could not be relied upon to keep a secret, and would interfere with the wholesome fun of the order. Later on, the Klan was not so careful to enforce its membership qualifications, and its power and influence for good in the community waned in proportion to its laxness in this respect.20

At first the Klan was strictly a law-abiding organization, each member swearing to engage only in those amusements and recreations that were legal and wholesome, to uphold the law at all times, and to assist officers in preserving peace and order whenever the occasion arose. Any member who violated this oath was banished forever from the organization.

19D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 403.
20Ibid., pp. 401-402.
But as the order became universal throughout the South, and as it gained power and recognition, the members became unwieldy and could not be controlled. 21

Eminently successful from the first, the Klan received all the notoriety it desired, and very soon the youths of neighboring communities heard of it and asked permission to organize "dens" of their own, using virtually the same constitution and initiation ceremonies as that established by the Pulaski den. Since its mysterious features were most impressive, the Klan spread rapidly in the rural areas, where opportunities for recreation were almost non-existent. It was inevitable that the members should discover that mystery and fear have twice the power over the African mind as over that of a white man; and by the time Congress had discarded the Presidents' reconstruction plans, the Ku Klux Klan had taught the men of Tennessee and neighboring states the power of mystery over the credulous race which Congress was determined to intrust with the most difficult tasks of citizenship. Then, "when Southern society, turned upside down, groped about for some means of righting itself, it grasped the Pulaski idea." 22

In the original constitution of the Pulaski Klan had been outlined the purposes of the order, one of which was "the play-

21 Julia E. Jonsen, op. cit., p. 27.

ing of practical jokes upon the ignorant and superstitious negroes of the neighborhood." In pursuance of this amusing object the members came to understand the psychology of the Negro mind, and later, could easily make more serious adaptations to new situations when "they were driven by their anger and disgust at negro supremacy into expedients which their knowledge of negro weaknesses suggested...." Thus, almost by accident, a way was found to succeed which led insensibly farther and farther afield into the ways of violence and outlawry.

The Ku Klux movement was peculiar by reason of the causes which produced and fed the excitement. It illustrates the weird and irresistible power of the unknown and mysterious over the minds of men of all classes and conditions in life; and it illustrates how men by circumstances and conditions, in part of their own creation, may be carried away from their moorings and drifted along in a course against which reason and judgment protest.

When members from the country around Pulaski asked permission from the Grand Cyclops to establish dens in various parts of the county, it was granted; and thus the order spread farther and farther until it had covered the entire South like a gigantic spider's web. With strictest injunctions, each den was urged to keep the order secret, to continue the mysterious initiation ceremonies, and to admit only members of

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23 John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 250.
good character. But its rapid growth of necessity made the bonds uniting the South-wide order with the "mother den" at Pulaski weaker, and the elaborate organization crumbled due to its vast extent, and became demoralized as membership restrictions were eliminated or relaxed.27

Strange and peculiar notices, meaningful only to members of the Klan, were published in newspapers throughout the South in an effort to keep all the dens knit together. The Pulaski Citizen was to some extent the official organ, and through a tiny hole in the office wall was arranged all printing of official notices and orders to be sent to the branch dens. The manuscript to be printed, together with the money to pay the costs, was placed in the hole for the editor to find --- all in perfect secrecy. The galleys of type were destroyed as soon as they had been used; the pamphlets were stitched in a back room and finally left wrapped outside the door, where they would be picked up during the night by masked horsemen.28

The history of the Ku Klux Klan was only a part --- and perhaps not the most important part --- of the general movement which in the North was known as the "Ku Klux conspiracy." Probably not half of the disguised bands of men who appeared and disappeared throughout the South while the carpetbaggers controlled the state governments, were actually members of the Klan. Some were members of other similar orders, while many

27 D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 402.
28 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 436.
were members of mere neighborhood organizations. Others were bands of ruffians operating at night and capitalizing on Ku Klux methods to attain their own personal ends which, criminal or not, were not approved by the leaders of the Klan and the other orders. Much of the violence and crime attributed to the Ku Klux should be laid at the door of these lawless bands; but beyond question, the great orders themselves were responsible for many indefensible proceedings. 29

The Knights of the White Camellia was probably the next largest secret order in the South, although some maintain that it was even more extensive than the Ku Klux Klan. 30 Founded in New Orleans early in 1868, it spread rapidly from Louisiana into Texas and then across the South to the Carolinas. It was certainly inspired by the Klan, organized three years previously, and was similar to it except that it was established from the very beginning with the expressed purpose of "regulating" the freedmen. Its constitution provided for an elaborate organization by states, counties, and smaller communities, the affairs of the whole order to be committed to the supreme council at New Orleans. But in the main, each "circle" acted independently.

The constitution, oaths of membership, and the initiation ceremonies committed the order to a clear and decided stand on the chief question of the day. The initiate promised not


30 Ibid., p. 209.
only to be secret and obedient, but "to maintain and defend the social and political superiority of the white race on this continent." The charge to the initiate set forth historical evidences of the superiority of the white race, argued for white supremacy, and painted the horrors of miscegenation. But it enjoined fairness to the Negroes, and the making of concessions to them of "the fullest measure of those rights which we recognize as theirs." The order was not a political party, and the constitution restrained it from officially nominating or endorsing any candidates for office.31

The White Camellias were not rivals of the Ku Klux; on the contrary, where the two orders came in contact, they cooperated in attaining their common purposes.32

To the end that their primary purpose --- "the maintenance of the supremacy of the white race" --- might be achieved, members of the White Camellia were constrained "to observe a marked distinction between the races" and to restrain "the African race to that condition of social and political inferiority for which God has destined it." Members pledged themselves to vote only for whites for all offices, to oppose Negro equality in all things, but to respect the legitimate rights of the freedmen.33

"Pale Faces," "Constitutional Union Guards," and "White Brotherhood" were other names borne by important bands of

32 Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 438.
33 Walter L. Fleming, op. cit., p. 252.
masked men who did, independently, similar work to that accomplished by the Ku Klux Klan. The Congressional investigating committee believed that these were the real names, at different periods, of one gigantic order that pervaded the entire South, and that "Ku Klux" was a name foisted on the public to the end that a member, when on the witness stand, might deny all knowledge of the organization. Nevertheless, there was a real Ku Klux Klan, the forerunner of all the secret societies of the reconstruction era in the South.

The comparative strength of the various associations; the connection, if any there was, between them; the character of their membership; the differences in their aims and motives and methods; --- on these things it is not probable that any clear light will ever be thrown. Surviving members are themselves somewhat hazy on such questions.

By 1868, the Ku Klux Klan was said to have over 555,000 members, widely scattered in all the Southern states. With the advent of Negro suffrage, too, the Klan turned seriously to the business of "regulating" the freedmen by the use of identical methods originally employed to furnish amusement to members. Now the Klan was transformed into a definite movement that was an expression of a determination on the part of the Southern white not to submit to the political domination

35 Ibid., p. 211.
of the blacks.37 The dens became secret revolutionary societies, growing out of the general conviction that reconstruction policies were impossible and unendurable.38 The Klan was a chief factor in the expulsion of the carpetbaggers and in the consequent bringing of the natural white leaders of the South to the forefront in social and political life.39

KU KLUX AIMS AND METHODS

It was noticed that, in the country, wherever the Ku Klux appeared, the nocturnal wanderings of the black population diminished or entirely disappeared, and,

In this way the Klan gradually realized that the most powerful devices ever constructed for controlling the ignorant and superstitious were in their hands. Even the most highly cultured were not able wholly to resist the weird and peculiar feeling which pervaded the whole community. Each week some new incident occurred to illustrate the amazing power of the Unknown over the minds of men of all classes.40

Three combined factors worked for the transformation of the Klan into a band of regulators: (1) the deep impression made by the order upon the minds of those who joined it; (2) the impression it made upon the public by its weird and mysterious mannerisms; and (3) the anomalous and peculiar condition of affairs in the South at that time.41

40 D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 403.
41 Ibid., p. 403.
Circumstances made it evident that the measures and methods employed for sport might effectively be incorporated to serve the public welfare --- to suppress lawlessness and to protect property. When such proposals were first heard in the dens, many hesitated, fearing danger; but the majority regarded such fears as groundless, and pointed to the good results already produced. So the question was decided without formal action: the very force of circumstances had carried the Klan away from its original purpose, so that by the beginning of 1867 it was virtually, though not yet professedly, "a band of regulators, honestly, but in an injudicious and dangerous way, trying to protect property and preserve peace and order." 42

Excesses had been committed by members of the Klan prior to 1867, and it was feared that the order would soon be suppressed by legislation. Rash, imprudent, and evil men had managed to join the organization through a relaxation of membership qualifications --- men who had stooped to violence against the freedmen. Gladly would its leaders have disbanded the Klan, but they had evoked a spirit that would not down at their mere bidding. Hence, the only course likely to solve the difficulty was to reorganize the Klan so as to bind the isolated dens together, to secure a unity of purpose and concert of action, to hedge members and dens in by such regulations as would restrain them within proper limits, to distribute the

42 D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 403.
authority among the most prudent men in all the dens, to set
up stricter membership laws, to exact a closer supervision over
all members. Thus it was hoped that the impending dangers
might be effectually averted. The Klan and its members had
to be better controlled and kept within safe limits.

In an attempt to achieve these objectives, the Grand Cy-
clops issued a call for a South-wide convention of the "Invisi-
ble Empire of the Ku Klux", to be held in Nashville in the
spring of 1867. At this convention occurred the first offi-
cial recognition of the apparent transformation of the Klan
into a body of regulators. Hoping thereby to carry out its
new function without the possibility of violence, the Klan in
convention assembled, adopted the following resolutions to be
added to the constitution:

First: To protect the weak, the innocent, and the
defenceless against the indignities, wrongs, and outrages
of the lawless, the violent, and the brutal; to relieve
the injured and oppressed; to succor the suffering and un-
fortunate and especially the widows and orphans of Confed-
erate soldiers.

Second: To protect and defend the Constitution of
the United States and all laws passed in conformity thereto,
and to protect the states and the people thereof from
all invasion from any source whatever.

Third: To aid and assist in the execution of all
constitutional laws, and to protect the people from un-
lawful seizure and from trial except by their peers in
conformity to the laws of the land.

By these resolutions, and by others more binding, the

43 D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 403.
44 Ibid., p. 405.
45 Emory Q. Hawk, op. cit., pp. 443-444.
leaders of the Klan desired to restrain and control its members, and to correct the evils and promote order in Southern society, to do the latter solely by the same means originally employed for amusement.46

After the Nashville convention, the Klan put itself more clearly in evidence, adhering to its original vows of mystery and secrecy and silence, but too often adding violence to these. On July 4, 1867, by widely publicized parades throughout the state of Tennessee, it exhibited itself more impressively than ever before. In Pulaski four hundred hooded horsemen marched silently through the streets without having a single disguise penetrated. By an ingenious scheme of marching and counter-marching, they gave the impression of large numbers of horsemen. So effectively was this done, and so successfully did the mystery of the procession prey even upon intelligent minds, that a number of "reputable citizens" estimated the number of Klansmen in the parades to be not less than three thousand. Members living in the town averted suspicion by appearing undisguised among the spectators. One gentleman, priding himself that he knew every horse in the county, tried to identify a rider by lifting the robe on his horse --- to discover that the animal and saddle were his own.47

The hooded and robed horsemen made a profound impression upon the public mind. When the Klan was meeting in its den-

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47william g. brown, the lower south in american history, pp. 204-205.
houses, passers-by encountered a grim and ghostly figure acting as sentinel on the road. Most travelers passed with a quickened step, but to those who dared ask, "Who are you?" the invariable answer was, "A spirit from the other world. I was killed at ----", mentioning some famous battle in the Civil War. Such answers, especially if given to the superstitious Negroes, were extremely terrifying; and if the passers-by also heard uproarious noises from the nearby den, which was by no means uncommon, he had the foundation for a most awe-inspiring story.48

The most exaggerated tales were circulated among the freedmen regarding the nature and strength of the Ku Klux. The mere rumor that they were "riding" in the neighborhood was sufficient to send every black to his cabin. Fear and mystery performed miracles with the freedman's vision, and he often, in his stories, magnified a band of a dozen masked riders of hideous appearance to a hundred. Seldom was he "visited" by less than fifty, and often he reported that two or three hundred had been in the group. His voice broke with fear and emotion, his teeth chattered, and he looked about furtively as he recounted his awe-inspiring adventures with "dem Ku Kluxes."

The idea was widespread in early reconstruction days that the Ku Klux were spirits of dead Confederate soldiers, possessed of supernatural powers: they could take themselves to pieces

48D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 403.
at will, rattle their bones, and drink whole pailfuls of water. Their practice of conversing in mysterious, unintelligible language was called "mummicking." In Mississippi the Negroes were utterly overcome with fear of a horrible monster living in the Yazoo swamps, who went about the country carrying a flesh bag in his hand, of the shape of a human heart, and "hollering for fried nigger meat."49

On election day, a few empty graves along the roadsides kept the terrified Negroes away from the towns and consequently away from the polls. A coffin left at night at some freedman's door, or smears of red paint to suggest blood, created wild excitement, and usually resulted in an evacuated cabin. A single silent shrouded rider on a lonely road would send the Negro away at top speed. A few ghostly figures wandering about in a graveyard, where the darkies could see them as they passed along the road, created agonies of fear and provided a subject for prolific conversation for months. The very sound of horsemen on the road at night would send the freedmen from their beds to spend the night cowering in fright in the woods. They trembled with fear whenever they saw something white.50

Often being confronted unexpectedly by shrouded horsemen as they returned home along the roads from Union League meetings, the trembling Negroes were told by the ghostly figures

49 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 340.
that they were spirits of men killed at Shiloh or Chickamauga, who were now unable to rest in their graves because of the conduct of the blacks, who were told in a sepulchral voice of the necessity for remaining at home and taking less active part in predatory excursions abroad. Or, a ghostly figure might appear at the Negro's bedside, saying he had scratched through from Hell to warn the black of the evil consequences of his conduct if persisted in. Since Hell was a dry and thirsty land, he would ask for a drink of water. Drinking the proffered gourdful at one gulp, he would demand a bucketful. The gaping, trembling, chattering Negro would stand by in abject fear and amazement while the ghostly figure drank bucket after bucket; but the water was actually flowing into a rubber or skin sack concealed in his robes.51

The Ku Klux rattled chains and shook cow bones in a sack to frighten the blacks. Sometimes they would take an ear of corn, remove the pith from the cob, fill the cavity with powder, ignite it, and throw it into a crowd of blacks to explode, the grain --- and the Negroes! --- flying in all directions. Once a ghost rapped at the door of a Union League lodge room, shouting: "Hold on a minute till I turn this screw and let a little more power into my steam arm!" But the darkies tumbled through the windows and dashed for the woods.52

52 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., II, p. 347.
Some of the freedmen, giving the Ku Klux bucketfuls of water to drink, were sure they had heard the water sizzling as it flowed down the monstrous gullet, and they readily accepted the stranger’s explanation that this was the first drop he had tasted since he had been killed at Shiloh. Others reported having seen groups of motionless horsemen by the roadside, each holding his head in his hand. Others came flying home with tales of meeting with masked horsemen who insisted on shaking hands, and when the terrified Negro had complied, he yelled as he grasped the bony hand of a skeleton. Other freedmen who had turned against their own white people and had taken up with the carpetbaggers were often more roughly handled.\footnote{William G. Brown, \textit{The Lower South in American History}, pp. 192-193.}

A highway had been built over the grave of one Ku Klux, and he told a group of blacks that he had had difficulty in scratching up through the gravel. Sometimes Negro women were warned not to let their children cry --- the noise disturbed the slumbers of the dead who had come to life for one night. Sometimes a shrouded figure asked for the use of the Negro’s horse to ride to Hell, with which he was in communication by courier nine times daily. After having quenched the thirst of mysterious callers, a freedman might be frightened out of his wits by being asked to carry this disembodied spirit of the Confederacy back to the cemetery. There were stories of Ku Klux having swallowed hand saws, chisels, and files; one had
stolen a side of beef from a butcher's shop, leaving a note saying that he had eaten it all and had left hungry. Negro bystanders were sometimes asked to hold the head of a Ku Klux while he "fixed his backbone" or tightened his cork leg that he had worn since he was killed in the battle of Shiloh. Such actions as this led to the impression that the Ku Klux could "take themselves all to pieces whenever they wanted to."54

No violence was at first necessary in accomplishing the purposes of the Ku Klux Klan. One leading member of a local den declared that throughout the history of the Klan, the proportion of "tom-foolery" to violence was about a thousand to one.55 In the beginning, a silent host of white-sheeted horsemen on country roads at night was enough to inspire the blacks to good behavior for weeks and months. One silent ghoul posted near the meeting-place of a Union League would precipitate immediate dissolution. A horrible ghost walking slowly toward such a meeting-place would probably find no one there when he arrived. White figures in the graveyard kept the community quiet and subdued for weeks and gave the locality a reputation for "hants" that was almost ineradicable.56

Pacific methods sufficed until the carpetbagger and the scalawag were put in office under the reconstruction acts; then, since the whites were more incredulous than the blacks,

54Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., II, pp. 346-347.


sterner methods were utilized by the Klan, whose members patrolled disturbed neighborhoods; visited, warned, and frightened obnoxious persons; whipped some; hanged others. Although the carpetbaggers were far less pliable than the Negroes, where the Klan was strong a notice to leave the community was often sufficient to rid it of their presence.

The following account of the work of a county organization of the Knights of the White Camellia, given by the man who was its commander, is illustrative of the work accomplished by all the secret orders that dominated the decadent reconstruction era:

The authority of the commander (this office I held) was absolute. All were sworn to obey his orders. There was an inner circle in each circle, to which was committed any particular work: its movements were not known to other members of the order. This was necessary because, in our neighborhood, almost every Southern man was a member. At meetings of the full circle there was but little consideration as to work. The topic generally was law and order, and the necessity for organization. In fact, almost every meeting might have been public, so far as the discussions were concerned.

For the methods employed: In some cases they were severe, even extreme, but I believe they were necessary, although there was much wrong done when commanders were not the right men. There was too good an opportunity for individuals to take vengeance for personal grievances. A man, black or white, found dead in the road would furnish undisputed evidence that the Ku Klux Klan had been abroad. The officers of the law, even judges, were members; a jury could not be drawn without a majority of our men. In this county no act of violence was committed by our men. We operated on the terror inspired by the knowledge that we were organized. The carpet-baggers lived in constant dread of a visit, and were in great measure controlled through their fears. At one time, if


one of our people threatened or abused a carpet-bagger, his house or stable would be fired that night.... This occurred so often that it was impossible to separate the two events. Word was accordingly sent to a prominent carpet-bagger that if the thing happened again we would take him out at midday and hang him. There were no more fires.

The negroes had meetings at some point every night, in obedience to the orders of the carpet-baggers, who kept them organized in this way. So long as their meetings were orderly, we did not interfere, but when I got information that they were becoming disorderly and offensive, I ordered out a body of horsemen, who divided into squads and stationed themselves where the negroes would pass on their way home. They were permitted to dress themselves in any fashion their fancies might dictate, but their orders were positive not to utter a word or molest a negro in any manner. I rarely had to send twice to the same neighborhood. Occasionally a large body was sent out to ride about all night, with the same instructions as to silence. While the law against illegal voting had no penalty for the offense (no doubt an intentional omission) negroes often voted more than once at the same election. They assembled in such crowds at the polls that one had almost to fight one's way to deposit a ballot. A body of our men was detailed on election day to go early and take possession, with the usual order for silence. Few negroes voted that day; none twice. No violence.

We put up with carpet-bag rule as long as we could stand it. Then a messenger was sent to each of them --- they were filling all the county offices --- to tell them we had decided they must leave. This was all that was needed. They had been expecting it, they said, and they left without making any resistance. Owing to some local circumstances, the circle at ------ was disbanded about the time of the proclamation by President Grant, but we were not influenced by it in any degree. I think there were few instances of the disbandment of circles. The necessity of their existence expired with the exodus of the carpet-baggers.59

The Ku Klux movement was not entirely underground, and sheeted horsemen at night were not its only forces. Although secrecy and silence were its main devices, others were em-

ployed. The life of the carpetbagger was made wretched other than by dragging him out and flogging him. The scorn in which he was held was made plain to him by averted faces or contemptuous glances on the street, by obstacles in business, by empty pews all about him when he attended church services. At school his children were not asked to join in the play of other children, and had to seek the companionship of little darkies. As for the scalawag --- the Southerner who had gone radical --- there was reserved for him "a deeper hatred, a loftier contempt," than even the carpetbagger got for his portion.60

The Klan served to offset rather effectively the influence of the Union League among the blacks. Whereas the League attempted to aid the Negro in finding himself in the new society, the secret orders discouraged him from taking any part whatever in politics.61 By playing upon the fears, superstitions, cowardice, and credulity of the blacks, the secret orders regulated their conduct and that of their white leaders so that honor, life, and property might be secure in the South. Their efforts were directed toward "creating a white terror to counteract the black one."62

The Klansmen occupied themselves in breaking up Union Leagues, scattering bands of roving Negroes, whipping Negro

61 James W. Garner, Reconstruction in Mississippi, p. 338.
militiamen, compelling their victims to pledge non-support to the radical politicians, frightening black men from the polls, and coercing carpetbaggers and scalawags. A friendly view of the order might present it as an agency of social control.63

The proudest aristocrat, the most dignified professional man, the most staid college professor, attended the secret conclaves of the Klan and joined in midnight raids. Successfully defying the National Government, they laughed at the troops sent to oppress them. "The powerful arm of this masked army reached everywhere; none escaped it."64

Where their aims could not be attained by persuasion or other mild means, the whites had recourse to intimidation and force.65 A party of white men, with ropes conspicuous on their saddle-horns, would ride to the polling-places, announcing that a hanging would begin in fifteen minutes and leaving the imaginations of the would-be voters to do the rest. The blacks who had assembled to vote heard and promptly disappeared without casting their ballots.66

64 Marion T. Dawson, op. cit., p. 196.
65 E. Benjamin Andrews, The United States in Our Own Time, p. 38.
Decrees, orders, and "advice" were pompously given to the person who had incurred the displeasure of the Klan. Announced as orders of the Grand Cyclops, they had been registered in some mysterious corner of Hades, the exact location of the registrar's office having escaped the bearer's memory. If the message was a warning, the offender was informed that the Klan gave warnings but once.67 Warnings were usually to quit certain practices, and especially to stay away from the ballot-box. Should the warning fail, more severe methods were used, such as personal visitation upon the offender, and sometimes actual violence was employed, either officially or unofficially by members of the Klan. Tar and feathers were freely applied, and sometimes the whip was laid on unmercifully. Occasionally brutal murders were committed, although these were seldom sanctioned by the Klan, but were acts of uncontrolled members. Should Klan members be fired upon from behind bushes, swift revenge followed. Theirs was a regime of anarchy and terrorism, spreading "dismay among the ranks of the immoral and the worthless, both white and black."68

On one occasion the Grand Cyclops issued from his Tulaski office the following manifesto, promulgated to all dens throughout the South:

The blacks seem to be impressed with the belief that

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68Claude Bowers, op. cit., p. 346.
this Klan is especially their enemy. We are not the enemy of the blacks, so long as they behave themselves, make no threats upon us, and do not attack or interfere with us....

We reiterate that we are for peace and order. No man, white or black, shall be molested for his political sentiments.69

But as the Klan expanded, its methods became more lawless and violent. Members "whipped, plundered, abducted, imprisoned, tortured and murdered, for the prime purpose of keeping the negroes from exercising suffrage and holding office."70 Many respectable persons, who would not have participated personally in the nefarious escapades, condoned the practices of the order, and excused them as being necessary.71

It was almost impossible to secure the conviction of a Ku Klux in the courts of the South, because confederates or members in the witness chair or the jury box would perjure themselves to prevent conviction and punishment of Klansmen. In some regions it could well be said of Klan members that "murder with them was an occupation, and perjury was a pastime."72 Some of them had even sworn to perjure themselves, if necessary, to clear each other, and often managed to get themselves called as witnesses or jurors in the trials of their comrades.

The Klan's transformation from a band of regulators who

70 John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 251.
71 Ibid., p. 251.
72 James G. Blaine, op. cit., II, p. 469.
honestly, but in a mistaken way, attempted to preserve peace and order, into a body of desperate men who convulsed the South by their deeds of violence was unfortunate and ill-favored in every way, and led to fierce denunciation of the Klan and of all its members.\textsuperscript{73}

By 1869 the Klan had absorbed "all the horse thieves, cut-throats, bushwhackers and outlaws of every description" who continued to use the "signs, passwords, robes, and masks" of the Ku Klux for their own evil purposes. The Klan had "degenerated into a mob of rioters and marauders who plundered and abused friend and foe alike, sparing neither party nor sex." The advent of this vicious element caused the Klan to become "a dangerous and fearful conspiracy against society." Negroes were seized in their cabins and scourged; thousands were laid flat upon the ground with the white brutes standing on their head and feet, or they were tied down on logs or barrels, or fastened to trees with their bare backs toward the mob. Then they were beaten with "fence palings, hickory withes, ram rods, clubs, hoe handles, cart whips, harness straps, pine tops and fishing poles." Negro women were stripped, outraged, and paddled. Many victims were left bleeding, naked, and freezing in the woods or swamps. Some, after having had their backs "cut as fine as dog's hair" with cruel lashes, were made to run home with bullets whizzing about them.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{73}D. L. Wilson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 407.

\textsuperscript{74}Ellis P. Oberholtzer, \textit{op. cit.}, II, p. 352.
Judge Albion W. Tourgee of the North Carolina Supreme Court thus described the Ku Klux reign of terror:

Of the slain there were enough to furnish forth a battle-field, and all from those three classes, the negro, the scalawag, and the carpet-bagger --- all killed with deliberation, overwhelmed by numbers, roused from slumber at the murk midnight, in the hall of public assembly, upon the river-brink, on the lonely woods-road, in simulation of the public execution, --- shot, stabbed, hanged, drowned, mutilated beyond description, tortured beyond conception. And almost always by an unknown hand! Only the terrible, mysterious fact of death was certain.... And then the wounded, the whipped, the mangled, the bleeding, the torn! men despoiled of manhood! women gravid with dead children! bleeding backs! broken limbs! Ah! the wounded in this silent warfare were more thousands than those who groaned upon the slopes of Gettysburg.75

Sherman referred to Ku Klux operations after 1869 as "those dreadful acts."76 Even from the very beginning of the Klan the wiser Southern leaders had frowned upon it. The New Orleans Picayune, shortly after the Klan had found its way into Louisiana, denounced it as "all folly, ... an infinitude of harm." It believed that young men who went about frightening simple Negroes should be at home planting and working cotton and corn. Believing that the Klan's activities might serve to strengthen the radicals in the North, the editor advocated that all the "wild young men among us" should be "put behind the plow." He denounced each idle young white man as "a greater curse than two vagrant negroes." Criticism in-

75James F. Rhodes, op. cit., VI, p. 307.
76Ibid., VI, p. 314.
increased throughout the South after the order had degenerated into a mere murder society. The Macon, Mississippi, Beacon denounced in no uncertain terms the "midnight banditti" who ravaged the state, and recommended that it should be "made disreputable to countenance such outrages," which were "foul ulcers" on the name and reputation of the South. A Freedman's Bureau official in Tennessee had not, in all his travels, encountered "a single citizen of any standing" who did not deplore the manifestations of lawlessness. Benjamin H. Hill of Georgia declared: "The Ku Klux business is the worst that ever afflicted the South. Every day that we let it continue we cut our own throats.... It is a curse upon our land, a blight following slavery and war, and the greatest blunder our people ever committed."

In Georgia it was thought that nine-tenths of the people opposed the Ku Klux Klan in its latter days of recklessness. The Augusta Constitutionalist declared that the time was at hand for the people to rise up and speak out against widespread lawlessness; "secret organizations and midnight mobs" must be condemned in the strongest language. It believed that the most "reputable men" rejoiced when a disguised outlaw was shot. Men perpetrating such outrages were "the worst enemies of our people on God's earth," and "every decent man in the South is ready to say so."

77 Ellis P. Oberholtzer, op. cit., II, p. 353.
78 Ibid., II, p. 354.
In South Carolina, the "thing" had "gone far enough. All reliable men who have at heart the good of the state and the peace and order of society" gave the Ku Klux not "any encouragement whatever."79

However, there were those who made excuses for the outrages committed by the Klan, justifying them as the outgrowth of certain peculiar conditions prevailing in the South. Be that as it may, it is certain that the Ku Klux sealed their own death warrant in their excesses.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE KU KLUX

"The great idea of American reconstruction,"80 the Ku Klux Klan, with all its shortcomings and abuses, succeeded at last in accomplishing its purpose, in rehabilitating the Southern white, from whose hands the ballot had been struck. The Ku Klux movement was an effort of the Southern whites to destroy the control of the combination of Negroes, carpet-baggers, and scalawags.

Armed resistance on the part of the South was out of the question, and staging another rebellion was unthinkable; yet some control must be had of the ruinous situation. When the South hit upon the Ku Klux idea it had discovered its medium.

The Klan served to center, direct, and crystallize

80 Julia E. Johnsen, op. cit., p. 30.
public opinion, by this means uniting the whites upon a platform of white supremacy. It frightened the Negroes and objectionable whites into better conduct, encouraged the conservatives in the South, and helped them to regain control of society. Without the operations of the Ku Klux, certain "black districts" of the South would probably have been lost forever to white control. As a result of Ku Klux activity,

The lawless class assumed the habits of good behavior. Under their fear of the dreaded Ku Klux the Negroes made more progress in a few months in the needed lessons of self-control, industry, and respect for the rights of property and general good behavior, than they would have done in as many years but for this or some equally powerful impulse. The "Union League" relaxed its desperate severity and became more moderate.

There can be little doubt that the Ku Klux Klan aided some of the Southern states to turn Democratic instead of Republican, in spite of the reconstruction acts, which operated largely to disfranchise the Southern white. Yet the Klan did not play the sole part in assisting the old ruling class to regain their position of leadership in the South; other factors were also operating in this direction: through the reconstruction years more and more Southerners were asking for and receiving amnesty from the Federal Government, and their pardon opened the way to their participation in politics; too, many young men had reached manhood since

82 D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 404.
the war and now possessed the franchise, unencumbered by the restrictions that limited the political activities of many of their elders; again, the North was becoming aroused by repeated exposures of corruption in the Federal Government and was questioning the advisability of continuing radical policies in the South. All these factors operated hand in hand to free the South and to restore it to its old leaders.

Nevertheless the Ku Klux Klan did more than any other organized force toward cementing the alienated states of the American nation into a new and indissoluble Union. 84

That the Southern white man of the post-reconstruction era holds the Ku Klux in high esteem is indicated by the following paragraph:

"The Ku Klux saved the South" is the expression in which he sums up in a phrase a point of view which has grown into a fixed tradition in the states of the former Confederacy. To the average southern white man of today the name of the Ku Klux Klan, after the lapse of half a century, typifies all that was best and finest in the chivalry of the old south. It conveys to him the impression of valiant men resisting tyranny, of the salvation of the white race from the threatened negro domination (with all that that implied socially as well as politically), and of the rescue of the white womanhood of the South from a frightful and ever-present peril. 85

Whatever may be the judgment of history, those who were acquainted with the actual facts in the case, will ever remain firm in the conviction that the Klan performed an immense and necessary service during the turmoil of reconstruction. "Without it life to decent people would not have been

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84 Julia E. Johnsen, _op. cit._, p. 33.
85 _Ibid._, p. 19.
tolerable. It served a good purpose, for wherever the Ku Klux appeared the effect was salutary."86

Despite abundant evidence that the Ku Klux movement was in large measure but "the unorganized and sporadic expression of social demoralization,"87 it was made to serve political aims; and when the Federal Government, aroused by its unlawful depredations, undertook to curb its activities, the political motive was seized upon as dominant to such an extent that the famous "Ku Klux Act" of April 20, 1871, assumed to deal with a new rebellion in the South.88 Upon promulgation of this act, which authorized state officials to arrest and try all persons found going about the country in disguise, the Grand Cyclops of the Klan sent forth an edict to all the dens dissolving "the invisible empire of the South." He was happy to find an excuse to disband the unwieldy empire, for it had long been out of control and demoralized. But even after official dissolution, the monstrous depredations of evil-bent masked men continued in some sections.89

Disappearing from Southern life as it had come into it --- shrouded in deepest mystery --- the Klan passed from the Southern stage not without an untarnished reputation. It had been the greatest enigma of American politics: its mem-

86D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 404.
88Ibid., p. 187.
bers, even after its dissolution, would not divulge its secrets, and others lacked the information to do so; even the investigating committee appointed by Congress was, after tedious and diligent inquiry, baffled. Thus the secret order had remained comparatively a closed book even to inquiring minds.

Although brutal and barbaric in many of its methods, the Ku Klux Klan was perhaps the most instrumental factor in the redemption of the Old South from alien rule and excessively corrupt government. As the old governing aristocracy regained power, partially through the utilization of extra-legal devices, undesirable Negroes were slowly ousted forever from control; obnoxious carpetbaggers were invited to leave the country, although many of the honorable Northern men were respected and urged to remain in the South; and despised scalawaggs were the recipients of odium and viciousness. It cannot be claimed that all the methods used by the Ku Klux were gentle, honorable, and above reproach; as a matter of fact, many of them were decidedly the reverse. This was especially true in the latter days of the movement after the Klan had unwittingly become the tool of numbers of unscrupulous Southerners who capitalized upon its secrecy and mystery to seek personal revenge and to express race hatreds. Justified as necessary expedients by those who utilized them, Ku Klux practices were rather effective, though wholesome, in returning the South to the control of that group of Southerners who had been invested with the administration of its affairs before the war had destroyed their

90D. L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 398.
leadership and disrupted the traditions and institutions revered by that class in the population. It is regrettable that, in the opinion of those who resorted to them, such means had to be employed; yet they perhaps were no more vicious and unreasonable than had been the restrictions and limitations placed upon the political activities of the Southern oligarchy during the reconstruction era by the radical element in the Federal Government in pursuit of its apparently determined efforts to subdue the political influence of Southern leaders by the application of limitations and restraints.

The Ku Klux Klan was the natural answer of a desperate group of Southerners to a hopeless situation that held no promise of a return to power for them. Arising out of lawlessness, it fought governmental anarchy with extra-legal anarchy and thereby assisted in the overthrow of the state governments, weakened to the core by corruption, extravagance, and incompetency on the part of carpetbaggers, scalawags, and freedmen who, though adventitious rulers for a time in some sections of the South, attacked their duties without possessing the advantages of training and experience in governmental responsibility. Whether or not its purpose was noble and its methods justifiable, the Klan accomplished its work and then vanished.

But this much is certain and irrevocable: the Ku Klux Klan will forever remain "among the great secret movements of the world's history that have been brought into existence to right the wrongs of humanity." 91

91Julia E. Johnsen, op. cit., p. 30.
CHAPTER VII
THE ROAD TO ADJUSTMENT

None in the South seemed to grasp the significance of the problems that arose as a product of the success of the Ku Klux Klan as a means of subordinating the Negro to those who had always controlled him until traditional social forms were upset by war and reconstruction. But the Negro was now legally a freedman, though held in subordination both by his lack of cultural opportunities, and by the white man, who, working primarily through "the invisible empire," had placed a restraining hand upon his actions.

Chief among the contentions of the whites was that the Negro was not capable of voting intelligently, of ruling efficiently, of serving the public welfare faithfully. Yet, for almost a decade the freedman had been attempting to do those very things, for, as chance would have it, his was almost the only hand that could grasp the ballot under the new policy. And he had wielded it forcefully, to the utter dismay of his white subjects, who saw in the sable electors and legislators the ruin of the South and the destruction of tradition. Through a system of combatting anarchy and corruption with lawlessness and determination, the whites were again on the verge of claiming political superiority. For a decade they had been dreaming of the time when they might
again be able to play a part in the drama of the political and social life of the South; and now that the time had come when they were definitely on the ascendancy, their consuming desire was to right the courses of Southern society by returning the Negro to a subordinate position. This they proposed to do through an elaborate system of disfranchisement.

THE DISFRANCHISEMENT OF THE FREEDMEN

Essential as was the ballot to the uplifting of the Negro race, it was far better that the Negro should be compelled to achieve for himself political influence and social prestige through education, industry, and morality, than that he should be "permanently sustained in a position of unhealthy and adventitious importance,"¹ by the aid of Federal troops. It was not the enfranchisement of the freedmen nor the imposition of conditions for the readmission of the prodigal states that constituted the cardinal error of reconstruction, but the systematic breeding of enmity between the races by unjustifiable discrimination against the whites as the same time that nothing was done to educate the Negroes whom the national power had freed and placed in control of affairs in the South.

The net result of reconstruction was Negro rule;² that of white ascendancy was to be Negro disfranchisement and so-

¹Thomas W. Higginson and William MacDonald, History of the United States, p. 577.
²Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 547.
cial subordination. The radical state governments, operating in most instances under modern and highly efficient constitutions, and upheld by the strong arm of the Federal Government, failed not so much because of their structure as because of their personnel: carpetbaggers were contemptible parasites; the Negroes were but just liberated from bondage and were unprepared to rule; while the scalawag was the recipient of unalloyed antipathy. ³

Many of the strongest and ablest carpetbaggers, finding social and economic conditions in the South far different from their anticipations, had returned to the North, leaving a weakened political organization to cope with obstinate, underground, determined, and organized opposition in the form of secret societies. ⁴ This situation played directly into the hands of the Southern whites, who capitalized upon it.

Throughout the South much contention was heard about a "white man's government," though in many sections the whites were definitely outnumbered by their sable fellows. The Southern philosophy at this time, built up during the reconstruction while Negroes were in power, was, "I believe in white men only, I believe this country was made for white men only; this is a white man's government, and no Negro shall have any part in it!" ⁵

⁵Sidney Andrews, The South Since the War, pp. 36, 154.
By 1873, the Ku Klux were driven out of existence, but some of their methods survived in the operations of other organizations. In 1875 several of the states adopted and successfully worked the so-called "Mississippi plan," whose aim was, by whatever means necessary, "to nullify black votes until white majorities were assured." Their program was less violent than that of the Ku Klux, but fully as thorough.

The plan, as the name indicates, had its origin in Mississippi, in the black belt, where the whites were having difficulty in preventing Negroes from "jumbling" important local elections. At last a plan was suggested by a bright young fellow who, to test its practicality, bought great quantities of Negro hair from barber shops and waste blood from the butchers' slaughter-pens; and on the night before election a committee went out from town a mile or so on every road and path, scattering wool and blood generously on the ground, and pawing up the turf with foot-tracks and the distinct imprints of human bodies. Hundreds of Negroes quit their fields to proceed to the polling-place, but stopped aghast at the signs of such an awful battle, and fled to their cabins in confusion. Not a Negro vote was cast that day.

The Mississippi plan was designed to play upon the easy credulity of the freedmen and terrorize them so that they would either vote the Democratic ticket or else remain absent.

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from the polls. In counties where the contest raged fiercest between the Negroes and the whites, the latter usually gave the latter to understand that they were determined to win the election --- "peaceably if they could, forcibly if they must." 

After 1872, when the Freedmen's Bureau went out of existence, the Negroes were compelled to remain on the land, usually as tenants of the whites, for they could no longer rely upon the Bureau for assistance in emergency. Hence, by threats of ejection, many landlords found it easy to persuade their tenants and share-croppers to abstain from political activity. Employers in industry used similar means of coercion. But many Negroes, gradually beginning to realize that they might expect more personal kindness from their old masters than from the carpetbaggers, were voluntarily leaving the ranks of the reconstructionists.

The Thirteenth Amendment had freed the Negro, the Fourteenth had made him a citizen, and the Fifteenth had conferred upon and protected him in his right to vote; but the speedy breaking up of Negro suffrage after the war left little time for any complete proof as to the capacity or discretion of the freedman; however, the Southern white already had his opinion, and probably would not have altered it even in the face of contrary evidence.

In the decade 1870-80 intimidation, theft, suppression, or exchange of the ballot boxes; removal of the polls to unknown places; false certificates; and illegal arrests on the day before an election were the chief means used by the South to make the Negro vote of little effect. Soon the Republican party in the South declined, and after a while the Democrats refused to admit Negroes to their primaries. Generally after 1871 the Negro vote was in one way or another rendered ineffectual in every state in the South.10

Some state legislatures made the rules of elections so intricate that the average Negro intelligence could not comprehend them. In South Carolina, with eight or more boxes before him, the voter must choose the proper one for each ballot to insure its being counted. This alone was effective in neutralizing the ignorant black vote. The Negroes, unable to read the lettering, might learn the relative positions of the boxes by means of effective coaching by their carpetbag promptors, but a moment's work by the election officials in transposing the boxes rendered useless an hour's laborious instruction.11 Polling-places were often established so remote from Negro communities that it might be necessary for the freedman to travel from twenty to forty miles to cast his ballot. At ferries on election day, when he attempted to cross over, the boats were likely to be undergoing repairs. The number of polling-places was so small that rapid voting was necessary; so the whites, by challenges and carefully planned quarrels among themselves, often amused the

10Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., p. 149.
blacks gathered about the polls until only time enough remained for their own votes to be cast. Again, the place of voting might be changed without the blacks having been informed, or the report of a change might be circulated when none had been made. Open bribery on a large scale was too common to excite much comment. The whites attempted in some cases to dissuade the Negroes from registering for the privilege of voting in the reconstruction electorates by telling them that the government was going to tax them heavily, or that it would require military service of them.

A Georgia Negro presented himself to be enrolled on the registration list after his state had gone Democratic. The official looked at him, opened a large book, and read a section of the state constitution. "Tell me what that means, and then I will register you," he said. "Boss, it mean jus' dis," replied the freedman; "dis nigger ain't gwine ter vote."

The process of undoing reconstruction may be divided into three periods: (1) the successful struggle of the Southern white to regain his position in the government of his own state; (2) a period in which the political equality of the Negro was still recognized by law, though not in fact, and in which the Republican party was practically extinct in

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the South; and (3) the termination of equal rights in law as well as in fact.15 In this latter period the procedures rested upon legislation and fraud instead of upon intimidation and force, as during the Ku Klux era.

Supplementing, on occasion, deliberate and high-handed fraud for exploitation of the poverty, credulity, ignorance, and general childishness of the Negroes, the stuffing of ballot-boxes with illegal ballots and the manipulation of figures in making the count were developed into serious arts. The use of tissue ballots greatly facilitated this work. No regulations were made in those days as to the size and nature of the ballots, hence miniature ballots of tissue paper were secretly prepared and given to trusted voters who, folding fifteen or twenty of the small tickets in one ordinary large one, passed the whole, without detection, into the ballot-box.16 The tissue ballot was a means of protection and defense improvised by the Southern white against the character and actions of the men who rode to power on the Negro ballot. It was usually explained as being a means of assisting the Negro who desired to vote the Democratic ticket to do so secretly and so escape ostracism and other social penalties usually falling to those who deserted the radical ranks. Hence, most Negroes who preferred to vote with the Southerners dared not, for they might be completely ostracized. For

16Ibid., pp. 444-445.
the mere casting of a non-radical ballot, preachers would be excommunicated from their church and have their licenses revoked, and members of their own race would ignore them. One freedman was obliged to make a coffin and dig the grave for his own child because he had bolted the Republican ticket, and was too terrified to apply for help from his old master who had won his vote. The tissue ballot gave opportunity for the freedmen to vote as they chose without detection.17

The stuffing of ballot-boxes had been instituted by the Union Leagues, and had been taken up by the Southerners in self-defense. Such methods had been unknown before the war and prior to the coming of the carpetbagger.18 Such fraud and intimidation were practiced, and some violence was exercised, but always in such manner as not to provoke the calling of the United States troops to the scene.19

There can be no contention that methods employed in winning supremacy for the white race were legal and without blemish; but in being questionable and extra-legal they were but following the trend of the times — reconstruction was characterized by illegal measures and procedures on the part of all parties in attempting to gain advantage and suppress opponents. Some there were who regretted the measures that seemed so necessary to the winning of white supremacy; others

18Peter J. Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 448-449.
19John W. Burgess, op. cit., p. 275.
attempted to justify them:

Those who thought it worthwhile to offer an explanation very wisely said that it was more humane to manipulate the ballot against the Negro than to use brute force to drive him away from the polling-place. In short, election frauds were considered a good substitute for Ku Klux methods. It was generally accepted as the only solution, at that time, of a most dangerous situation.20

"Race integrity" was the special cry of the South at the time when it was struggling for ascendancy. There should be no intercourse whatever with blacks on terms of equality. Many Negro leaders, including Washington and Moton, his successor, desired social segregation for awhile for a different reason from that held by the whites. To the white, Negro segregation means Negro inferiority; to the Negro, it means separate railway coaches, schools, churches -- but more, it means a better chance for the Negro to find himself in a white man's world, in which he insists on equal, if separate, accommodations.21

Since reconstruction, the Negro has possessed no form of social equality in the South, and "Jim Crow" laws and segregation acts are to be found on the statute books of every Southern state. Under these, the Negro is compelled to use separate hotels, restaurants, public places of amusement, and street and railway cars, and to refrain from establishing residence in certain prescribed localities.22 Many former owners

21Willis M. West, op. cit., pp. 574-575.
22L. M. Hacker and B. B. Kendrick, op. cit., p. 68.
of slaves were willing to help the Negro only if he would recognize his state of subordination to the white man.

The freedman, so easily manipulated by persuasive personalities, had the misfortune to be started at the top of the political ladder when first he was given his rights as a free man. He had become a ruler before he had learned the first duties of a citizen; he was controlling others before he had mastered the art of controlling himself. Under such adverse circumstances, he could not long retain his powers --- the power that had been placed in his hands unasked for. Finding himself in a strange situation, he groped about in search of a way out; and, becoming lost in a maze of political intrigues, corruption, and venality, he was easily overthrown in time by those who, all the time, had been marshalling their forces to contest his adventitious position. "In spite of all the warnings of science and political experience, he was started at the top and, as is the fate of most such unfortunates, he fell to the bottom."23

WHITE SUPREMACY REGAINED

One of the strangest errors of reconstruction was embodied in the fact that the Congressional leaders of the radical policy failed to foresee that Southern men of their own stock would resist such a policy as they planned to inflict

upon the seceded states, and that sooner or later they would find some way of making their resistance effective. The slaveholding element of the Southern population, having learned to combine, conspire, and command, could not be kept suppressed and voiceless for long, and would inevitably come again to the top. Then, too, the tendencies toward submission and dependence on the part of the freedmen, and that of domination in the whites, were too strong to permit such a reversal of the familiar relations and the natural, traditional order.

By the close of 1870, the North had imposed its system of reconstruction in its entirety upon all the South, but actually, "the South was rapidly carrying out a counter-revolution."26

It was a hollow trick, as judicious men could see, any longer to disguise the social disorder and political misrule, which disgraced the South, under the name of "Reconstruction." Such conditions were not to be tolerated by the people, and they called, and still call, the struggle to free themselves from the domination of the freedmen and those who were using the negroes for evil ends, "rescuing," or "redeeming" their states. Such, in truth, it was to them....27

Aroused at last by the mere instinct of self-preserv-

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25 George S. Merriam, op. cit., p. 322.
26 Willis M. West, op. cit., p. 563.
tion, the white men of the South were determined to rid themselves, by fair means or foul, of the "intolerable burden of governments sustained by the votes of ignorant negroes and conducted in the interest of adventurers." It was this united determination which made the Ku Klux Klan and other secret organizations effective. By combination, secrecy, and singleness of purpose, the whites exerted a force outside the government, before which the government ultimately fell. In most states, the union of Southern whites in one political party gave them a majority over the Negroes, and as they slowly regained the franchise, exerted an ever stronger influence in government. Using little violence, they excluded the Negro from the polls by threats of unemployment, persuasion, and vague intimidation. For a while the Federal Government sustained the carpetbaggers by the use of troops, but this policy was becoming increasingly distasteful to Grant and to the nation at large. The Negroes, numerically much in excess of the whites, were very definitely demoralized by the "aggressiveness and unanimity of the latter, and in the ultimate test of race strength the weaker gave way."

Political solidarity was a new thing in the South, the outgrowth of reconstruction methods: "As Reconstruction rested

26 Woodrow Wilson, A History of the American People, V, p. 58.
29 Ibid., V, p. 58.
30 Willis M. West, op. cit., p. 563.
on the basis of a solid black vote, so its overthrow was accomplished by a solid white vote."32

Through their exclusive and carefully maintained control of the voting and the count the whites found the best opportunities for illegal, though effective, methods.33 Nevertheless, they employed better methods when they could, as when each white would pledge himself to win one Negro vote through rational means, take him to the polls, and thereafter protect him from radical punishment. He also was quick to avail himself of the weak spots in the opponents' armor and argument.34

Broadly speaking, the carpetbag and Negro governments fell because they were too weak to withstand the well-organized, determined minority who were fighting for what they firmly believed was their social, economic, and political existence. Even in the height of their power, the radical governments had been undermined by corruption and venality, and had felt secure only when protected with Federal troops. Had those governments as a class been more capable, efficient, and honest, the whole story of reconstruction and its overthrow might have been far different.35

Other factors in reconstruction were operating to aid

34Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 292.
35F. B. Simkins and R. H. Woody, op. cit., p. 112.
the Southern whites in their struggle. The mass of the Negroes, rapidly being forced by circumstances to become sharecroppers, were comparing their return to virtual slavery with the roseate dreams that the carpetbaggers had promised to fulfill. As a result, many of the freedmen lost interest in the whole reconstruction program, and many of them turned again to their old masters for advice and protection. At the same time that the Negroes were becoming luke-warm, the better elements of the native white loyalists were being sickened by the rising tide of corruption. Johnson's program had promised to deliver the South into the hands of these small farmers, but the radical policy had been based upon the votes of their enemies, the Negroes. Like the Negroes, these men saw that the carpetbaggers held the best offices and enriched themselves by raids upon the public treasury. And, since the rising tax rate affected small property-holders as well as great ones, these people slowly came to accept again the old leadership that they had known before the war --- not through any love of the aristocrats, but through a revival of their ancient enmity with the Negro.36

The fires of reconstruction fused the whites of the South into a more homogeneous society, socially as well as politically. The former slaveholder was still more considerate of the freedman than was the poor white; but, as misrule continued, all classes tended to unite against the Negro in

politics. The whole South was tired of reconstruction, of new amendments, of force bills, of Federal troops --- tired of being ruled as a conquered principality by incompetent and dishonest demagogues. Every measure aimed at the South seemed to mean that its people were considered incorrigible and unworthy of trust.\textsuperscript{37}

For a number of years before the withdrawal of Federal troops, Northern voters had been coming to realize that the effort to intimidate and force the South into "the northern political mold was both costly and futile."\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps without a definite reaction in Northern sentiment, the restoration of white supremacy in the South would have been impossible. Seeing the evils that the radical policy had brought upon the South, moderates in the North urged moderation and amnesty as the means of bringing the South to accept a real economic reconstruction. They pointed out the fact that "capital and intelligence must lead," and advocated abandoning the Negroes and making an appeal to "the thinking and influential native Southerners," the "intelligent, well-to-do, and controlling class." Horace Greeley, one of the leading advocates of this policy, toured the South to study actual conditions, and returned home to report that that section was suffering from "decayed aristocracy and imported rascality;"

\textsuperscript{37}Walter I. Fleming, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 279.

that both the Ku Klux and the carpetbaggers must be removed from Southern life, was Greeley’s verdict.39

The greatest single factor in the downfall of the radicals was the acquisition by the Southern conservatives of the techniques of revolution. The old planter aristocracy had feared Negro rule because it was ignorant, and would have preferred a military regime. Excesses on the part of the radicals drove them to desperation. The rising tax rate caused taxpayers’ conventions to petition the governments to curtail expenditures, but "the black taxmakers in the legislature were not property-holders and had no sympathy with the plight of their former masters." At first the old leaders had hoped to control the Negro vote, but the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Union League had defeated that purpose. At length, in desperation, they turned to extra-legal means to secure the redemption of their states.40

To do this, of course, the radical regime must be broken in the South. At least five important factors contributed to the failure of these reconstruction governments: (1) the growing weariness of the Northern people of the eternal Southern problem, which caused enthusiasm to wane, and a growth of sympathy with the victims of the Congressional theorizers; when they saw what he had done with his freedom, they lost some of their interest in the elevation of the Negro; (2)

40Ibid., pp. 633-634.
wholesale fraud, coupled with the incompetency of the new Southern governments; (3) increasing confidence on the part of the South that it could manage the situation in its own way; (4) the deterioration of the Southern Republican party; the more respectable carpetbaggers and scalawags had given way to corrupt men; and (5) the rise of the Ku Klux movement, which struck at the activity of the freedmen and paralyzed their worst efforts, giving courage to the whites and showing them how to neutralize Negro suffrage.  

With the disappearance of carpetbag and Negro governments, the third era in the political history of the South since the Civil War began. The first had been characterized by exclusively white suffrage; the second; by predominantly Negro suffrage; and now, in the third, "universal suffrage and complete legal equality were soon perceived to mean in practice the full supremacy of the whites." This supremacy had been acquired through bribery, intimidation, and other questionable procedures, of which one Southerner said:

These things are all wrong, but there was no other way. Some stood off and kept clean hands. But a thing had to be done, and we did it, not minding the theoretical dirt. The negroes were armed with ballots and bayonets, and the bayonets were at our breasts. Our lands were taxed until we were letting our homes go because we could not pay the taxes, while corrupt officials were waxing fat. We had to take our country from under negro rule any way we could.  

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41 John S. Bassett, op. cit., p. 626.


43 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 292.
The Southerner could forgive and forget the wounds of the war, but not the humiliation put upon him afterwards, and his own enforced self-degradation. 44

When reconstruction ended in 1876, the personal property that had remained at the close of the war had almost entirely disappeared at the hands of the reconstructionists. But the people of the South bore with remarkable fortitude and courage their sense of defeat, as bitter as that had been. Nor did they repine at their loss of property, even by the force of arms, or at the disruption of their social system or the destruction of their distinctive civilization, of which the rest of the country has never had any accurate idea. These were no little burdens to bear, but the people assumed them bravely and went to work again --- many of them with spirited energy and courage --- to build on the memory of the old a new civilization. 45

In this new civilization, the white people of the South were to have control, absolute and undisputed, of every state, and of most of the counties in them. Not only was this control to include authority over the political affairs of the South, but over the social and economic as well, 46 for the one result of the white man's struggle for supremacy was to return the South into his hands for administration. Where Negroes were not numerous, the work of "redemption" was not long delayed, for in these sections the carpetbaggers could not hope, by any activity, to marshall enough blacks to outvote the white inhabitants, when the latter at last escaped

44 Myrta L. Avary, op. cit., p. 292.
45 Edgar W. Knight, op. cit., p. 380.
46 The South in the Building of the Nation, VI, p. 656.
from disabilities and earned the franchise for themselves,\textsuperscript{47} resolute that, when they had reconstructed the South according to their own way of thinking, "under no circumstances would they admit to equality those who had been their slaves, and who for a few short years had been their rulers."\textsuperscript{48}

After Hayes had withdrawn the last of the Federal troops from the South in the spring of 1877, after a decade of radical rule and military occupation,

Order and peace were quickly established everywhere, and the plundered and impoverished South could at last take hope and feel courage to make new effort to recover some degree of prosperity and some measure of domestic content. For ten years the dark night of domination by the negro and adventurer had rested upon the unhappy section, until it had been reduced to the very abomination of desolation. Broken in health and fortune, sick at heart, conscious of the terrible degradation which had been imposed upon them, and politically ostracized, the better part of the white population of the South had staggered and groped through the hideous experiences of this period, and such of them as had not perished during the awful passage had now at last been relieved of the frightful scourge, and half dazed, as if just recovering from a terrible nightmare, found themselves again in the places of power and responsibility.\textsuperscript{49}

The haste with which the Southern states had recalled their representatives from Congress just at the outbreak of the Civil War was more than equalled by their eagerness to get them back into their seats after the orgy of reconstruction had been brought to a close.\textsuperscript{50} Having re-established

\textsuperscript{47}Ellis P. Oberholtzer, \textit{op. cit.}, III, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{48}Maurice S. Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54.

\textsuperscript{49}John W. Burgess, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 296.

\textsuperscript{50}J. T. Trowbridge, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 587.
themselves at home, the Southerners were eager to rehabilitate their states in the Federal Union.

Having accomplished this, the South was left to itself to deal with its own peculiar problems in a manner that would be compatible with its own interests and welfare. The Negro, having enjoyed a brief interim of prominence, was relegated to the bottom of Southern society, economics, and politics. Whereas the fruit of reconstruction had been Negro rule, that of white supremacy was Negro debasement.

Whites who had been leaders of the Old South, upon regaining power in the New, applied the same tactics against the Negro as had been embodied in the reconstruction acts of a decade before --- acts that had relegated the whites themselves to a status of legal inferiority. Negro rule had, in the main, been misrule. It undoubtedly had been a serious mistake to empower an unlettered people to administer the affairs of government, even if only to the extent that the Negroes had had a voice in certain sections of the South; for the nominal Negro governments were actually controlled to an appreciable extent by carpetbaggers and scalawags --- white men attaining to power on the strength of ballots that they had placed in the hands of the freedmen. Negroes were present in varying proportions in the several Southern legislatures, but often they voted in accordance with the wishes of their white patrons and were virtually voiceless on their own behalf.

Sensing this fact, the old Southern leaders, in their struggle for a return to authority, directed their efforts as
much toward the carpetbaggers and scalawags as against their black compatriots.

To the Southern mind, the first duty presenting itself after the restoration of the white race to power, was to put the Negro back where he had been "when freedom cried out" --- to pass laws that would operate to exclude him from all participation in the affairs of the South, making of him a political automaton. But in most instances the South has since been willing to recognize the Negro's right of participation when he has shown himself capable of rational thinking and acting; hence an ever increasing number of blacks are taking part in the affairs of the South and are distinguishing themselves as citizens.

Since reconstruction, the Southern Negro has had to work his way up from the bottom, has had to make for himself a place in Southern society --- a place begrudged him by its leaders, who have ever found it difficult to name him a citizen. It is not improbable that, as he shows himself more worthy, he will be given a larger place. The South became reconstructed politically in the twelve years after Lincoln: perhaps in some distant future the two races that compose the population of the South will discover a way in which they can work together and live side by side in equitable harmony as two complementary elements in Southern society. Only then will the South be reconstructed socially.
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In addition to the works and magazine articles cited above, the writer, in gathering data for the preparation of this dissertation, consulted numerous manuscript collections in the archives of the State Historical Collection, North
Texas State Teachers' College. Of particular value were the Moore Papers, consisting of several hundred letters and three diaries written during the Civil War and reconstruction eras. Of especial interest, though only indirectly pertaining to the period herein under consideration, was a brief manuscript entitled "When Generals Lee and Grant Met at Appomattox," by Col. Ed. C. Wilson, an eye-witness of the Southern surrender. It was found valuable for its brief description of conditions in the South immediately following the war. Recurring citations in the body of the thesis indicate something of the extent to which these letters and documents were utilized.