

A Southerner Looks at Negro Discrimination

SELECTED WRITINGS OF
GEORGE W. CABLE

EDITED, WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, BY
ISABEL CABLE MANES. WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY PROF. ALVA W. TAYLOR



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INTRODUCTION

BY PROFESSOR ALVA W. TAYLOR

Secretary-Treasurer, Southern Conference for Human Welfare

The courageous and valiant George W. Cable, literary highlight of a generation gone and inimitable teller of Creole and other old Louisiana tales, is less known for his essays and social crusading on behalf of justice to the Negro than for his old Creole stories. He was in his day numbered with Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and other literary lions, but he was quite as distinguished for his pleas as a southerner for the emancipation of his beloved South from its smothering of liberty and democracy through the color-caste system with which the inequities of slavery are continued.

As a lad of nineteen he enlisted in the Confederate army and saw action in plenty, but after it all he quoted as his own sentiment the verse of a fellow southerner, Maurice Thompson:

I am a Southerner;
I love the South; I dared for her
To fight from Lookout to the sea
With her proud banner over me:
But from my lips thanksgiving broke
As God in battle-thunder spoke,
And that Black Idol, breeding drouth
And dearth of human sympathy
Throughout the sweet and sensuous South,
Was, with its chains and human yoke,
Blown hellward from the cannon's mouth,
While Freedom cheered behind the smoke.

Sixty years ago Cable penned his essays on "A Case in Equity," "The Silent South," and other topics on the color line question that are today as up-to-date as tomorrow. One needs as he reads them to take an invoice of gains made, or their contemporaneousness to the arguments and pleas of crusaders for equity and social justice on the color line today may lead him to ask whether or not any progress has been made. He saw in the static fixing of a caste system in his day, only two score years after the Civil War, that Lincoln's emancipation was a legal breaking of the property right to hold a fellow man in slavery, but no guarantee of that equity in which alone freedom could be realized. The slave code was transmuted into a code of racial inferiority misnamed "social equality." The principles of democracy and its laws require equity in the treatment of all free men as individuals; they require that the free man be accorded all his culture, character, and intelligence can win for him in unhandicapped attainment. Denial of "social equality" was based upon a foundation that came up out of slavery. How could we make human beings property without rationalizing some logic that enabled us to do it and still both claim to believe in and to enjoy for ourselves the principles of the Declaration of Independence, the guarantees of the Bill of Rights, and the teaching of the Christian religion in regard to brotherhood, the dignity of the person and that mighty solvent of all injustice, the Golden Rule? We did it by convincing ourselves at the best that the Negro race was by nature and hand of God an inferior race and we watered that rationalization with benevolence, soul saving, and human kindness to our underlings; at the worst we argued he had no soul, was only a little above the animal, was born, as Aristotle said of the lowly, to be "a hewer of wood and a drawer of water." And all the hang-over of an inferior status still clings, and is riveted to the rationalizations that enabled our fathers to hold the black man under the bondage of property right.

Cable was arguing long before Booker T. Washington

made it an epigram that "you can't hold the Negro in the ditch without staying in it with him"; he saw in the caste system the white southerner's greatest handicap; he used no harsh terms toward his beloved South but kindly, though with unequivocal logic, argued that a static caste system for the Negro smothers the white conscience, inflicts injustice and leaves a false common law of custom to rule. It enables the crudest and meanest of whites to claim privilege over the most cultured of Negroes; it inflicts poverty, denial of opportunity and citizenship to many who happen to be born under the racial handicap, and it denies to the colored brother many of the equities we claim for ourselves; it is, therefore, unchristian, undemocratic, unfair, and unbecoming to the white man's sense of self-respect.

He asks that we atone for slavery by doing justly toward the race our fathers wronged, that we unburden ourselves of false concepts and the tyrannies that denial of equity and opportunity visits upon our colored citizenry.

He argues that human rights take precedence over states rights, that the question cannot be settled by force or by silence, that artificial distinctions deny human rights, that democracy requires consent and that it is denied when caste lines are drawn, when one is denied trial by a jury of his peers as the Negro is when all jurors are white, when skills and occupations are denied him, when his children are condemned to ignorance by lack of educational facilities, and that there is no cure except through equity and justice. He pleads especially with the "silent south"—that increasing number who wish the inequities could be resolved but who are too timid to make their convictions vocal. He knew their kindness, their Christian convictions, their wishful thinking; but he knew also their fears of scorn of the prejudiced and their unwillingness to pay any price for the sake of justice and equity toward their colored neighbor. Fortunately their numbers and their courage is increasing, but the "mills of the gods grind

slowly" and those who have the courage to dare and the will to endure the censures of the prejudiced can hasten them greatly. Cable reminds us that while "silence is golden," too much gold around one's neck can drown one.

Nashville, Tennessee

GEORGE W. CABLE, FIGHTER
FOR PROGRESS IN THE SOUTH

BY ISABEL CABLE MANES

Unfortunately, I have only scant memories of my grandfather. Vivid among them, as a child's impressions often are, is an early visit to his Northampton home, Tarryawhile. It had been impressed upon me that Grandfather was an old man and an important person, not to be bothered by little girls. Imagine, then, my delight at finding a lively little man with the most fascinating mustachios, who threw sticks all afternoon for his dog, Sandy, to retrieve—and then capped the climax by asking me if I would *like* to get up early in the morning and explore his woods! It was a small instance, but typical of his warm-hearted sympathy and understanding which, together with his strong sense of justice and passionate belief in the principles of democracy, breathe through his stories and led him to take the stand he did on the Negro question.

His point of departure for consideration of this problem was the Declaration of Independence, which, he tells us, he memorized at the age of nine "under a mother's promise of an American flag for reward." "Even then," he says, "I remember I was puzzled to know how men could declare such ideal truths and yet hold other men in slavery."¹

And for the solution of this troubled question, he felt, we must return to those early principles.

"... To bring the men of best blood and best brains in

the South today, not to a new and strange doctrine, but back to the faith of their fathers." 2

To those familiar with his stories, the George W. Cable of these articles needs no introduction. His stand is a logical one for the author of *Madame Delphine*, *The Grandissimes*, and *Bonaventure*. The very themes of these books—*Madame Delphine*, treating the plight of the octoroon; *The Grandissimes*, a study of two half-brothers, one white and one part Negro, and containing the stirring "Story of Bras Coupé"; and *Bonaventure*, a tale of those Louisiana "poor whites," the 'Cajuns, and their struggle for education in Reconstruction times—show his social awareness. To those who know only Cable the novelist, this summary of his political beliefs will bring new appreciation and understanding of his work, as well as of the Negro question; while those unfamiliar with his writing will be introduced to an author who combines profound social understanding with a charm unsurpassed in American literature.

George W. Cable was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1844. His father, a New Orleans businessman, died after a prolonged illness and severe business reverses when the boy was fifteen. He left school and went to work as a warehouse clerk. Two years later the Civil War broke out; but, small, slight and boyish looking, he was unable to enlist in the Confederate Army until 1863.

Back in New Orleans after the war, he married, became for a time reporter and columnist on the *Picayune*, lived through the turbulent Reconstruction days with, as he tells us in *The Silent South*, "his sympathies ranged upon the pro-Southern side of the issue, and his convictions drifting irresistibly to the other." In 1873 he published, in *Scribner's Magazine*, his first story, "'Sieur George"—later to be included in *Old Creole Days*. More short stories followed, and in 1878 he began work on *The Grandissimes*.

He has described for us his purpose in writing this novel.

"It was impossible that a novel written by me then should escape being a study of the fierce struggle going on around me, regarded in the light of that past history—those beginnings—which had so differentiated Louisiana civilization from the American scheme of public society. I meant to make *The Grandissimes* as truly a political work as it has ever been called. . . . My friends and kindred looked on with disapproval and dismay, and said all they could to restrain me. 'Why wantonly offend thousands of your own people?' But I did not intend to offend. I wrote as near to truth and justice as I knew how." ³

The year 1879 saw the publication of his first book, *Old Creole Days*, a collection of previously published short stories. *The Grandissimes* appeared in 1880. By now his literary reputation was established, and on his next visit North to his publishers he met the literary lights of the day—Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Charles Dudley Warner, Henry Ward Beecher and his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others. Mark Twain has described one of these early meetings for us in a letter to William Dean Howells in November, 1882:

"... Cable has been here, creating worshipers on all hands. He is a marvelous talker on a deep subject. I do not see how even Spencer could unwind a thought more smoothly or orderly, and do it in cleaner, clearer, crisper English. He astonished Twichell with his faculty. You know, when it comes down to moral honesty, limpid innocence, and utterly blemishless piety, the Apostles were mere policemen to Cable." ⁴

Now also began a series of lectures and public readings from his works which took him all over the country. One memorable tour was made with Mark Twain, another with Eugene Field.

In July, 1884, he went North to live, settling finally in Northampton, Massachusetts. My grandmother's health had originally made the change necessary; but the fact that

he was now a writer and lecturer by profession made it important for him to be near his manager and publishers in New York. *Dr. Sévier* had just appeared, and the first of his political writings, *The Convict Lease System in the Southern States*.

His interest in the South's great problem was by no means lessened after he moved to New England. As he himself wrote, "I felt that I belonged still, peculiarly, to the South. I had shared in every political error of the 'Southerner,' and had enjoyed whatever benefits the old slaveholding civilization had to offer. A resultant duty bound me to my best conception of the true interest of the South as a whole—the whole South, white and black. This, aside from the fact that the Negro question is a national question which it is particularly the duty of men of the South to solve; a duty from which they are not released by moving North." ⁵

Just six months after he left New Orleans, *The Freedman's Case in Equity* was published and raised a storm of denunciation from Southerners, notably Henry W. Grady of the *Atlanta Constitution*. Cable wrote "The Silent South" ⁶ as an answer to Grady and other critics. Then in 1888 he addressed the graduates of Vanderbilt University on "The Faith of Our Fathers" and was immediately afterwards asked by the London *Contemporary Review* for an article on the Negro question in the United States. Using the Nashville address as a basis, he wrote *The Negro Question*, which was simultaneously published in London, New York, and Chicago. Later, it was reprinted as a pamphlet by the American Missionary Society and, he tells us, "distributed by thousands in the Southern States. Rightly enough, too, for I have never written on any phase of the Southern Question but I wrote most of all for Southern readers.

"Very soon after this," he continues, "I was invited to address a 'National League' of colored men in Boston. I spoke to them not of rights, but of duties, under the sub-

ject, 'What Shall the Negro Do?' And, being invited by *The Forum* a few days later, to contribute an essay, I resolved the meager notes of that address into a careful paper. A few months later Senator Eustis, of Louisiana, printed an essay in *The Forum* on 'Race Antagonism in the South,' and, being invited to reply, I decided to review the papers of four Southern writers [Senator Eustis, Governor Colquitt of Georgia, Colonel Watterson, and Governor Wade Hampton of South Carolina] eminent in politics, written within a year. The result was my essay, 'A Simpler Southern Question.'

"Such is a summary of my political writings and an account of how they came to be. I have never shaped them to the needs of any political party. I dedicate my pen to that great question—not of party exigency but of political ethics—on which I can best speak and write, to which as a native Louisianian and an 'ex-Confederate' I am in duty bound, and which is still the most serious and urgent question before the nation: a peaceable Renaissance of the Southern States upon the political foundations laid by the nation's fathers, Northern and Southern, when they rose above the dictates of established order, the temptations of the moment's comfort, and the fear to take risks for the right, and gave to their children and the world the Declaration of Independence as an ultimate ideal to be daily and yearly striven toward with faith, diligence and courage." 7

Though 1892 saw his last published article on the Negro question, he continued throughout his life to contribute both financial assistance and advice to this cause, particularly to the advancement of Negro education in the South. Many Negro educators—including Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois—were among the prominent men who visited him in his Northampton home. It was disillusioning to find that even in liberal Northampton, where Booker T. Washington's daughter attended Smith College, these men were refused service at local restaurants; and Cable himself was criticized for having them as guests at

his table. How could he in common decency do less, he asked such critics. On another occasion he could be pleasantly surprised at the tremendous progress made in Negro-white relationships, as when he wrote his wife:

"I wrote you last in Wash'n. I didn't tell you that I met Fred. Douglass. He came into the retiring room & was there when the President [Chester A. Arthur] was there. They met as acquaintances. Think of it! A runaway slave!"⁸

In Northampton, however, the problem of the foreign-born workers was more prominent than the Negro question, and here his extra-curricular activities included the establishment of the "Home Culture Clubs," for the purpose of forwarding their education and cementing friendly understanding between them and the Massachusetts residents of early American stock. His publishers, indeed, complained that he neglected his writing for these social responsibilities. He did not agree with them.

Even today, a generation after his death, he is still recognized by discerning critics. Hamilton Basso, writing in *The New Republic* for June 19, 1935, calls him "the first writer to question the validity of the tradition," and "the spiritual godfather of those modern writers who also question the tradition." In his survey "The Negro in American Fiction," Sterling Brown, one of the foremost American critics and poets and himself a Negro, says: "Cable's fiction shows full acquaintance with folk-songs, speech, lore and superstitions, but unlike his contemporaries, Page and Harris, he does not use the material to support old traditions. He makes clear-eyed, telling observations on the South. . . . All in all, Cable is one of the finest creators of Negro character in the nineteenth century."

It is somewhat disheartening to see how little the struggle for democratic rights has advanced in more than half a century. What a reflection it is on the slowness of our progress that these articles, written more than fifty years

ago, are so timely today! But in the last few years there have been new currents stirring in the South. The rise of fascism and World War II have exposed the danger to the democratic rights of the whole community when a particular group is denied its rights. It has become far clearer than before that those who harbor racial prejudice and who practice discrimination are contributing to the growth of fascism. It is natural that such organizations as the Southern Conference for Human Welfare should materially increase in numbers and influence in these times, and that other progressive voices should make themselves heard, individually or collectively, in the South today. This is indeed the "Silent South" to which Cable appealed—and today it is not only speaking out, but actively combating Jim-Crowism.

Cable's call for Negro organizations, to fight for civil and political rights, is being ably answered by the National Negro Congress, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Negro Youth Congress, and a multitude of other organizations and groups. The growth of the Communist Party in the South, too, will have far-reaching consequences. The Communists have always made the struggle for full economic, political, and social equality for the Negro people an integral part of their program, not only in the South but nationally. Southern liberals remember with gratitude the work of the Communist Party in the Scottsboro case, and its pioneering work in many phases of southern life. It is basic to the success of this cause that all progressive groups cooperate in the struggle for Negro rights, however far apart they may be on ultimate aims.

It is certainly significant that the most militant passage to be found in any of these articles is Cable's appeal to the Negro people to fight for the right to vote. How he would have welcomed the present struggle for the franchise, against every device that robs the Negro of suffrage! He was aware, too, of the importance of developing Negro

leaders, and the drive for the right of Negroes to hold office would have had all his sympathy and support.

Industrial development in the South since Cable's time, limited though it has been, has wrought great changes. He noted the beginnings and expressed the fear that if it were not based on free labor, such as existed in the North, but on poorly paid, poorly educated workers, kept in subjection by denial of their civil and political rights, it would prevent the South's achieving economic progress and prosperity. He did not foresee, however, how industrialization would act to weld the workers, Negro and white, together to change these conditions. The tremendous growth of the labor movement, of the A. F. of L. and the C. I. O., and the constantly growing numbers and role of the Negro workers in the trade unions have had their effect on the South. Here, too, the influence of the last war is felt. Thousands of poor farmers and sharecroppers, black and white, were drawn into industry, temporarily or permanently, and became conscious, for the first time, of the need for, and the possibilities of, organization. This growth of trade union organization is bound to strengthen and broaden the fight for the Negro's democratic rights, as more and more workers discover how organically the struggle for better working conditions is bound up with the wider struggle; that wage differentials between North and South, between Negro and white, could not exist without other differentials in housing, health, education, without other forms of Jim-Crow; that, as Cable said, "this whole policy of the black man's repression under a taxpayer's government is constantly escaping from its intended bounds and running into a fierce and general oppression of the laboring classes, white or black." 9

His own city, New Orleans, in 1944 honored him by the launching of the Liberty Ship, *George W. Cable*. It is to be hoped that this booklet will help to keep his name alive and to carry on his fight against Negro discrimination and for a democratic South.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NEGRO DISCRIMINATION

The Plantation System

In the South, the cornerstone of the social structure was made the plantation idea—wide lands, an accomplished few, and their rapid aggrandizement by the fostering oversight and employment of an unskilled many. In the North, it was the village and town idea—the notion of farm and factory, skilled labor, an intelligent many, and ultimate wealth through an assured public tranquillity....

Wherever the farm village became the germinal unit of social organization, there was developed in its most comprehensive integrity, that American idea of our Northern and Southern fathers, the representative self-government of the whole people by the constant free consent of all to the frequently reconsidered choice of the majority.

Such a scheme can be safe only when it includes inherently the continual and diligent elevation of that lower mass which human society everywhere is constantly precipitating. But slaveholding on any large scale could not make even a show of public safety without the continual and diligent debasement of its enslaved lower millions. Wherever it prevailed it was bound by the natural necessities of its own existence to undermine and corrode the National scheme. It mistaught the new generations of the white South that the slaveholding fathers of the republic were approvers and advocates of that sad practice, which by their true histories we know they would gladly have de-

stroyed. It mistaught us to construe the right of a uniform government of all by all, not as a common and inalienable right of man, but as a privilege that became a right only by a people's merit, and which our forefathers bought with the blood of the Revolution in 1776-83, and which our slaves did not and should not be allowed to acquire. It mistaught us to seek prosperity in the concentration instead of the diffusion of wealth, to seek public safety in a state of siege rather than in a state of peace; it gave us subjects instead of fellow citizens, and falsely threatened us with the utter shipwreck of public and private society if we dared accord civil power to the degraded millions to whom we had forbidden patriotism. Thus, it could not help but misteach us also to subordinate to its preservation the maintainance of a National Union with those Northern communities to whose whole scheme of order slaveholding was intolerable, and to rise at length against the will of the majority and dissolve the Union when that majority refused to give slaveholding the National sanction.

The other system taught the inherent right of all human society to self-government. It taught the impersonal civil equality of all. It admitted that the private, personal inequality of individuals is inevitable, necessary, right and good; but condemned its misuse to set up arbitrary public inequalities. It declared public equality to be, on the one hand, the only true and adequate counterpoise against private inequalities, and, on the other, the best protector and promoter of just private inequalities against unjust. It held that virtue, intelligence, and wealth are their own sufficient advantage, and need for self-protection no arbitrary civil preponderance; that their powers of self-protection are never inadequate save when by forgetting equity they mass and exasperate ignorance, vice, and poverty against them. It insisted that there is no safe protection but self-protection; that poverty needs at least as much civil equipment for self-protection as property needs; that the right and liberty to acquire intelligence, virtue, and

wealth are just as precious as the right and liberty to maintain them, and need quite as much self-protection; that the secret of public order and highest prosperity is the common and equal right of all lawfully to acquire as well as retain every equitable means of self-aggrandizement, and that this right is assured to all only through the consent of all to the choice of the majority frequently appealed to without respect of persons. And last, it truly taught that a government founded on these principles and holding them essential to public peace and safety might comfortably bear the proximity of alien neighbors, whose ideas of right and order were not implacably hostile; but that it had no power to abide unless it could put down any internal mutiny against that choice of the majority which was, as it were, the Nation's first commandment.

The war was fought and the Union saved. Fought as it was, on the issue of the consent of all to the choice of the majority, the conviction forced its way that the strife would never end in peace until the liberty of self-government was guaranteed to the entire people, and slavery, as standing for the doctrine of public safety by subjugation, destroyed. Hence, first emancipation, and then, enfranchisement. . . .

It has always been hard for the North to understand the alacrity with which the ex-slaveholder learned to condemn as a moral and economic error that slavery in defense of which he endured four years of desolating war. But it was genuine, and here is the explanation: He believed personal enslavement essential to subjugation. Emancipation at one stroke proved it was not. But it proved no more. Unfortunately for the whole Nation there was already before emancipation came, a defined status, a peculiar niche, waiting for freed Negroes. They were nothing new. Nor was it new to lose personal ownership in one's slave. When, under emancipation, no one else could own him, we quickly saw he was not lost at all. There he stood, beggar

to us for room for the sole of his foot, the land and all its appliances ours, and he, by the stress of his daily needs, captive to the land. The moment he fell to work of his own free will, we saw that emancipation was even more ours than his; public order stood fast, our homes were safe, our firesides uninvaded; he still served, we still ruled; all need of holding him in private bondage was disproved, and when the notion of necessity vanished the notion of right vanished with it. Emancipation had destroyed private, it had not disturbed public, subjugation. The ex-slave was not a free man, he was only a free Negro.

The Problem of Political Liberty

Then the winners of the war saw that the great issue which had jeopardized the Union was not settled. The Government's foundation principle was not reestablished, and could not be, while millions of the country's population were without a voice as to who should rule, who should judge, and what should be law. But, as we have seen, the absolute civil equality of privately and socially unequal men was not the whole American idea. It was counter-balanced by an enlarged application of the same principle in the absolute equality of unequal States in the Federal Union, one of the greatest willing concessions ever made by stronger political bodies to weaker ones in the history of government. Now manifestly this great concession of equality among the unequal States becomes inordinate, unjust, and dangerous when millions of the people in one geographical section, native to the soil, of native parentage, having ties of interest and sympathy with no other land, are arbitrarily denied that political equality within the States which obtains elsewhere in the Union. This would make us two countries. But we cannot be two merely federated countries without changing our whole plan of government: and we cannot be one without a common foundation. Hence the freedman's enfranchisement.

It was given him not only because enfranchisement was his only true emancipation, but also because it was, and is, impossible to withhold it and carry on American government on American ground principles. Neither the Nation's honor nor its safety could allow the restoration of revolted States to their autonomy with their populations divided by lines of status abhorrent to the whole National structure.¹⁰

We deny that the experiment of full civil and political liberty has ever been fairly tried on the Negroes of the South. One thing has always been lacking, the want of which has made the experiment a false and unfair trial. It has always lacked the consent—it had the constant vehement opposition—of almost the whole upper class of society in the commonwealth where the freedman's new and untried citizenship rested. Without landownership, commerce, credit, learning, political or financial experience, the world's acquaintance and esteem, the habit of organization, or any other element of political power except the naked ballot and the ability to appeal at last resort to the Federal authority, and with almost the whole upper class of society, and well-nigh all these elements of power skillfully arrayed against them, the Negroes . . . took up the task, abandoned to them in confident derision by their former masters, of establishing equal free government for all, in the States whose governments had never before been free to other than white men. . . . They began to rise on broader, truer foundations of political liberty and equity than had ever been laid in those States before: and certainly no people, even when not antagonized by the great bulk of a powerful class above them, ever set up both free and pure government in the first twelve years of their bodily emancipation or the first nine years of their enfranchisement. Another twelve years has passed, with the Negro's political power nullified, and the white, intelligent, wealth-holding class in uninterrupted control: and still that class is longing and groping in vain for pure

government, and is confessedly farther from it at the end of its twelfth year of recovered control than it was at the end of its first, while the principles of free government are crowded back to where they were twenty years ago. . . .

We see then how far the facts of history and present conditions are from proving the Southern States an exception to the rule that pure government cannot be got by setting its claims before and above free government. . . .

The Southern State governments had hardly changed hands, when their financial credit began to rise with a buoyancy which proved—if such proof had been needed—that it was only the governments repudiated and antagonized by the wealth-holding portion of the people that were bankrupt, and, whether their action was justifiable or not, it was nearer the truth to say the people had bankrupted the governments than that the governments had bankrupted the people.¹¹

II. THE NATURE OF NEGRO DISCRIMINATION.

"The Perpetual Alien"

What is this question? Superficially, it is whether a certain seven millions of the people, one-ninth of the whole, dwelling in and natives to the Southern States of the Union, and by law an undifferentiated part of the Nation, have or have not the same full measure of the American citizen's rights that they would have were they entirely of European instead of wholly or partly African descent. The seven millions concerning whom the question is asked, answer as with one voice, that they have not. Millions in the Northern States, and thousands in the Southern, of whites, make the same reply. While other millions of whites, in North and South, respond not so often with a flat contradiction as with a declaration far more disconcerting. For the "Southerner" speaks truly when he reports that nowhere in the entire Union, either North or South, are the disadvantages of being a black, or partly black, man confined entirely to the relations of domestic life and private society; but that in every part there is a portion, at least, of the community that does not claim for, or even willingly yield to the Negro the whole calendar of American rights in the same far-reaching amplitude and sacredness that they do for, or to, the white man. The Southern white man points to thousands of Northern and Western factories, counting rooms, schools, hotels, churches, and guilds, and these attest the truth of his

countercharge. Nowhere in the United States is there a whole community from which the black man, after his physical, mental and moral character have been duly weighed, if they be weighed at all, is not liable to suffer an unexplained discount for mere color and race.¹²

The greatest social problem before the American people today is, as it has been for a hundred years, the presence among us of the Negro.

No comparable entanglement was ever drawn round itself by any other modern nation with so serene a disregard of its ultimate issue, or with a more distinct national responsibility. The African slave was brought here by cruel force, and with everybody's consent except his own. Everywhere the practice was favored as a measure of common aggrandizement. When a few men and women protested, they were mobbed in the public interest, with the public consent. There rests, therefore, a moral responsibility on the whole nation never to lose sight of the results of African-American slavery until they cease to work mischief and injustice.

It is true these responsibilities may not fall everywhere with the same weight; but they are nowhere entirely removed. The original seed of trouble was sown with the full knowledge and consent of the nation. The nation was to blame; and so long as evils spring from it, their correction must be the nation's duty. . . .

We need to go back to the roots of things and study closely, analytically, the origin, the present foundation, the rationality, the rightness, of those sentiments surviving in us which prompt an attitude qualifying in any way peculiarly the black man's liberty among us. Such a treatment will be less abundant in incident, less picturesque; but it will be more thorough.

First, then, what are these sentiments? Foremost among them stands the idea that he is of necessity an alien. . . . Generations of American nativity made no difference; his

children and children's children were born in sight of our door, yet the old notion held fast. He increased to vast numbers, it never wavered. He accepted our dress, language, religion, all the fundamentals of our civilization, and became forever expatriated from his own land; still he remained, to us, an alien. . . .

Why, then, did this notion, that the man of color must always remain an alien, stand so unshaken? We may recall how, under ancient systems, he rose not only to high privileges, but often to public station and power. Singularly, with us the trouble lay in a modern principle of liberty. The whole idea of American government rested on all men's equal, inalienable right to secure their life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness by governments founded in their own consent. Hence, our Southern fathers, shedding their blood, or ready to shed it, for this principle, yet proposing in equal good conscience to continue holding the American black man and mulatto and quadroon in slavery, had to anchor that conscience, their conduct, and their laws in the conviction that the man of African tincture was, not by his master's arbitrary assertion merely, but by nature and unalterably, an alien. If that hold should break, one single wave of irresistible inference would lift our whole Southern social fabric and dash it upon the rocks of Negro emancipation and enfranchisement. How was it made secure? Not by books, though they were written among us from every possible point of view, but, with the mass of our slaveowners, by the calm hypothesis of a positive, intuitive knowledge. To them the statement was an axiom. They abandoned the methods of moral and intellectual reasoning, and fell back upon this assumption of a God-given instinct, nobler than reason, and which it was an insult to a freeman to ask him to prove on logical grounds.

Yet it was found not enough. The slave multiplied. Slavery was a dangerous institution. Few in the South today have any just idea how often the slave plotted for his

freedom. Our Southern ancestors were a noble, manly people, springing from some of the most highly intelligent, aspiring, upright and refined nations of the modern world; from the Huguenot, the French Chevalier, the Old Englander, the New Englander. Their acts were not always right; whose are? But for their peace of mind they had to believe them so. They therefore spoke much of the Negro's contentment with that servile condition for which nature had designed him. Yet there was no escaping the knowledge that we dared not trust the slave caste with any power that could be withheld from them. So the perpetual alien was made also a perpetual menial, and the belief became fixed that this, too, was nature's decree, not ours.

The Master-Slave Relationship

This perpetuation of the alien, menial relation tended to perpetuate the vices that naturally cling to servility, dense ignorance, and a hopeless separation from true liberty; and as we could not find it in our minds to blame slavery with this perpetuation, we could only assume as a further axiom that there was, by nature, a disqualifying taint in every drop of Negro blood. The testimony of an Irish, German, Italian, French, or Spanish beggar in a court of justice was taken on its merits; but the colored man's was excluded by law wherever it weighed against a white man. The colored man was a prejudged culprit. The discipline of the plantation required that the difference between master and slave be never lost sight of by either. It made our master caste a solid mass, and fixed a common masterhood and subserviency between the ruling and the serving race. Every one of us grew up in the idea that he had, by birth and race, certain broad powers of police over any and every person of color. . . .

Political Discrimination

Thus we reach the ultimate question of fact. Are the freedman's liberties suffering any real abridgement? The answer is easy. The letter of the laws, with a few exceptions, recognizes him as entitled to every right of an American citizen; and to some it may seem unimportant that there is scarcely one public relation of life in the South where he is not arbitrarily and unlawfully compelled to hold toward the white man the attitude of an alien, a menial, and a probable reprobate, by reason of his race and color. One of the marvels of future history will be that it was counted a small matter, by a majority of our nation, for six millions of people within it, made by its own decree a component part of it, to be subjected to a system of oppression so rank that nothing could make it seem small except the fact that they had already been ground under it for a century and a half. . . .

Suppose, for a moment, the tables turned. Suppose the courts of our Southern States, while changing no laws requiring the impaneling of jurymen without distinction as to race, etc., should suddenly begin to draw their thousands of jurymen all black, and well-nigh every one of them counting not only himself, but all his race, better than any white man. Assuming that their average of intelligence and morals should be not below that of jurymen as now drawn, would a white man, for all that, choose to be tried in one of those courts? Would he suspect nothing? Could one persuade him that his chances of even justice were all they should be, or all they would be were the court not evading the law in order to sustain an outrageous distinction against him because of the accidents of his birth? Yet only read white man for black man, and black man for white man, and that—I speak as an eye-witness—has been the practice for years, and is still so today; an actual emasculation, in the case of six million people both as plaintiff and defendant, of the right of trial by jury.

Social Discrimination

In this and other practices the outrage falls upon the freedman. Does it stop there? Far from it. It is the first premise of American principles that whatever elevates the lower stratum of the people lifts all the rest, and whatever holds it down, holds all down. For twenty years, therefore, the nation has been working to elevate the freedman. It counts this one of the great necessities of the hour. It has poured out its wealth publicly and privately for this purpose. . . . And it is in the face of all this that the adherent of the old regime stands in the way to every public privilege and place—steamer landing, railway platform, theatre, concert-hall, art display, public library, public school, courthouse, church, everything—flourishing the hot branding-iron of ignominious distinctions. He forbids the freedman to go into the water until *he* is satisfied that he knows how to swim, and for fear he should learn hangs millstones about his neck. This is what we are told is a small matter and will settle itself. Yes, like a roosting curse, until the outraged intelligence of the South lifts its indignant protest against this stupid firing into our own ranks.

I say the outraged intelligence of the South; for there are thousands of Southern-born white men and women, in the minority in all these places—in churches, courts, schools, libraries, theatres, concert-halls, and on steamers and railway carriages—who see the wrong and folly of these things, silently blush for them, and withhold their open protests only because their belief is unfortunately stronger in the futility of their counsel than in the power of a just cause. I do not justify their silence; but I affirm their sincerity and their goodly numbers. . . .

I say, as a citizen of an extreme Southern State, a native of Louisiana, an ex-Confederate soldier, and a lover of my home, my city, and my State, as well as of my country, that this is not the best sentiment in the South, nor the sentiment of her best intelligence; and that it would not ride

up and down that beautiful land dominating and domineering were it not for its tremendous power as the *traditional* sentiment of a conservative people. But is not silent endurance criminal? I cannot but repeat my own words, spoken near the scene and about the time of this event. [Cable refers to an attack made upon a Negro preacher who refused to sit in the Jim-Crow railroad car—Ed.] Speech may be silver and silence golden; but if a lump of gold is only big enough, it can drag us to the bottom of the sea and hold us there while all the world sails over us.

The laws... requiring "equal accommodations" [but segregated], for colored and white persons... defeated their ends; for... they at once reduced to half all opportunity for those more reasonable and mutually agreeable self-assortments which public assemblages and groups of passengers find it best to make in all other enlightened countries, making them on the score of conduct, dress, and price. They also led the whites to overlook what they would have seen instantly had these invidious distinctions been made against themselves: that their offense does not vanish at the guarantee against the loss of physical comfort. But we made, and are still making, a mistake beyond even this. For years many of us have carelessly taken for granted that these laws were being carried out in some shape that removed all just ground of complaint. It is common to say, "We allow the man of color to go and come at will, only let him sit apart in a place marked off for him." But marked off how? So as to mark him instantly as a menial. Not by railings and partitions merely, which, raised against any other class in the United States with the same invidious intent, would be kicked down as fast as put up, but by giving him besides, in every instance and without recourse, the most uncomfortable, uncleanest, and unsafest place; and the unsafety, uncleanness, and discomfort of most of these places are a shame to any community pretending to practice public justice. If any one can think the freedman

does not feel the indignities thus heaped upon him, let him take up any paper printed for colored men's patronage, or ask any colored man of known courageous utterance. . . .

The family relation has *rights*. Hence marital laws and laws of succession. But beyond the family circle there are no such things as social *rights*; and when our traditionalists talk about a too-hasty sympathy having "Fixed by enactment" the Negro's *social* and civil rights they talk—unwisely. All the relations of life that go by *impersonal right* are Civil relations. All that go by *personal choice* are Social relations. The one is all of right, it makes no difference who we are; the other is all of choice, and it makes all the difference who we are; and it is no little fault against ourselves as well as others, to make confusion between the two relations. For the one we make laws; for the other every one consults his own pleasure; and the law that refuses to protect a civil right, construing it a social privilege, deserves no more regard than if it should declare some social privilege to be a civil right. . . .

No [political] party dare say that in these United States there is any room for any one class of citizens to fasten arbitrarily upon any other class of citizens a *civil status* from which no merit of intelligence, virtue, or possessions can earn an extrication. We have a country large enough for all the unsociality anybody may want, but not for *incivility* either by or without the warrant of law. . . .¹³

"Black Supremacy"

. . . The struggle in the Southern States has never been by the blacks for, and by the whites against, a black supremacy, but only for and against an arbitrary pure white supremacy. From the very first until this day, in all the freedman's intellectual crudity, he has held fast to the one true, National doctrine of the absence of privilege and the rule of all by all.¹⁴

... The question today, pruned of all its dead wood, is this: Shall the Negro, individually, enjoy equally, and only equally, with the white man individually, that full measure of an American citizen's public rights, civil and political, decreed to him both as his and as an essential to the preservation of equal rights between the States; or shall he be compelled to abandon these inalienable human rights to the custody of Mr. Eustis' exclusively "white man's government" and "rely implicitly upon the magnanimity of his fellow citizens of the South to treat him with the justice and generosity due to his unfortunate condition?"

Shall or shall not this second choice be forced upon him for fear that otherwise these seven (million) black and lean kine may, so to speak, devour the twelve (million) white, fat kine, and "the torch of Caucasian civilization be extinguished" in the South, despite "the race antagonism" of the most powerful fifty-three million whites on earth? Is it not almost time for a really intrepid people to be getting ashamed of such a fear? ...*

It is only where a people are moved by the fear of "Negro Supremacy" that the simple *belief* in a divinely ordered race antagonism is used to justify the withholding of impersonal public rights which belong to every man because he is a man, and with which race and its real or imagined antagonisms have nothing to do!¹⁵

* In this paragraph and the preceding one Cable is quoting from "Race Antagonism in the South" by Senator James Biddle Eustis of Louisiana, published in the *Forum*, October, 1888.

III. THE RESULTS OF NEGRO DISCRIMINATION

In Economic Life

The present one-sided effort at settlement by subjugation is not only debasing to the under mass, but corrupting to the upper. For it teaches them to set aside questions of right and wrong for questions of expediency, to wink at and at times to defend and turn to account evasions, even bold infractions, of their own laws, when done to preserve arbitrary class domination; to vote confessedly for bad men and measures as against better, rather than jeopardize the white man's solid party and exclusive power; to regard virtue and intelligence, vice and ignorance, as going by race, and to extenuate and let go unprosecuted the most frightful crimes against the under class lest that class, being avenged, should gather a boldness inconsistent with its arbitrarily fixed status. Such results as these are contrary to our own and to all good government. . . .

There is now going on in several parts of the South a remarkable development of material wealth. Mills, mines, furnaces, quarries, railways are multiplying rapidly. The eye that cannot see the value of this aggrandizement must be dull indeed. But many an eye, in North and South, and to the South's loss, is crediting it with values that it has not. To many the "New South" we long for means only this industrial and commercial expansion, and our eager mercantile spirit forgets that even for making a people rich in goods a civil order on sound foundations is of greater value than coal or metals, spindles or looms. May

the South grow rich! But every wise friend of the South will wish, besides, to see wealth built upon public provisions for securing through it that general beneficence without which it is not really wealth. He would not wish those American States a wealth like that which once was Spain's. He would not wish to see their society more diligent for those conditions that concentrate wealth than for those that disseminate it. Yet he must see it. That is the situation, despite the assurances of a host of well-meaning flatterers that a New South is laying the foundations of a permanent prosperity. They cannot be laid on the old plantation idea, and much of that which is loosely called the New South today is farthest from it—it is only the Old South readapting the old plantation idea to a peasant labor and mineral products. Said a mine owner of the far North lately: "We shall never fear their competition till they get rid of that idea." A lasting prosperity cannot be hoped for without a disseminated wealth, and public social conditions to keep it from congestion. But this dissemination cannot be got save by a disseminated intelligence, nor intelligence be disseminated without a disseminated education, nor this be brought to any high value without liberty, responsibility, private inequality, public equality, self-regard, virtue, aspirations and their rewards.¹⁶

In Alabama, Mississippi, and other cotton states, under a domination which more and more tends to become merely a taxpayer's government, there has sprung up a system of crop-lien laws, mainly if not wholly devoted to the protection of landholders and storekeepers against farm tenants, so barren of counter-protections for the tenant that they have fairly earned the name given them by a United States judge in Arkansas, of "anaconda mortgages." Said this gentleman in an address before the Arkansas State Bar Association in 1886, "as a result of these defective and bad laws the State is afflicted with a type of money

lenders, traders, and methods of doing business the like of which was never seen before." Quoting from a Parliament report the statement that a certain creditor in Ireland had charged a Connaught peasant $43\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum, he asked, "What is $43\frac{1}{2}$ per cent compared to the profits charged by the holders of anaconda mortgages on tenants in Arkansas? They would scorn $43\frac{1}{2}$ per cent." ...

It will be said that the burdens of this system fall as heavily on a white man as if he were black. That may be, but it is a system unknown in our free land except in states where the tenant class is mostly Negroes, and just as far as white debtors fall under it, it illustrates a fact of which it is far from being the only proof; that this whole policy of the black man's repression under a taxpayer's government is constantly escaping from its intended bounds and running into a fierce and general oppression of the laboring classes, white or black. Yet the wealth-holding, taxpaying citizens of these same states, still really and untiringly bent upon a large and noble Renaissance in commerce, industry, and government, hold conventions and subscribe money to promote immigration. Can no one make them understand that a desirable immigration will never come to a land of long hours, low wages, and "anaconda mortgages"? The only way to make the South a good place for white men to come to is to make it a good place for black men to stay in....

In Education

For a long time the sincerity and earnest diligence of the more intelligent and liberal wing of the Southern Conservatives bent itself to a most commendable progressive measure; one which had already been irrevocably begun under the Reconstruction governments.... This measure was the expansion of the public school system, a system which... has always followed, not produced, the extension

of the suffrage. . . . While public education is the own child of the system of free government first, it is almost the only important factor of that scheme which does not obviously antagonize the opposite policy. And yet this opposite policy of pure government first is not, and by nature cannot be, the zealous promoter of the free school system that a free government policy is sure to be. . . . This is why the Southern States today have only schools enough for half their school population.¹⁷

The friends of ample free schools in the South cannot elect legislative majorities that will vote for them. And why? Because such friends among educated whites dare not—or think they dare not—coalesce with the colored vote on a question on which the whites are divided and the colored vote is a unit. To do so seems to them too rash a step toward the final admission of the colored voter into the same complete civil and political fellowship that he would enjoy if he were white. . . . For neither the Southern white people, nor any other people except a whole people, can ever furnish a majority that will vote a school tax ample for the whole people. Instead we find the whole mass of 3,000,000 of colored people held under an incessant, galling and tremendous pressure to abandon that claim. If they would but say, “all we want is education. All we want it for is to make ourselves better laborers and servants. Give us but ample free schools and we will waive all civil and political equality of rights and consent to be not Americans but only Africans in America,” there is no reasonable doubt that they could get it.

Christian fellow citizens, the day they do that—the day they speak thus—they abandon the whole end of which education is only the means—citizenship and Christian manhood. . . . But if the colored race in the South should become satisfied with a debased civil and political status, exclusively their own, they would stand, one great, dark,

melancholy proof that they never deserved to be anything but slaves. They will never do it. Where does white Christianity stand among them and bid them quit themselves like men? Only in the missionary colleges.¹⁸

IV. WHAT MUST BE DONE

"Delays Are Dangerous"

There is a school of thought in the South that stands midway between the traditionists and us. Its disciples have reasoned away the old traditions and are now hampered only by vague ideas of expediency. They pray everybody not to hurry. They have a most enormous capacity for pausing and considering. "It is a matter," says one of them in a late periodical, "of centuries rather than decades, of evolution rather than revolution." The heartlessness of such speeches they are totally unconscious of. Their prayer is not so much that our steps may be logical as geological. They propose to wait the slow growth of civilization as if it were the growth of rocks, or as if this were the twelfth or thirteenth century. They contemplate progress as if it were a planetary movement to be looked at through a telescope. Why, we are the motive power of progress! Its speed depends on our courage, integrity, and activity. It is an insult to a forbearing God and the civilized world for us to sit in full view of moral and civil wrongs manifestly bad and curable, saying we must expect this or that, and that, geologically considered, we are getting along quite rapidly. Such talk never won a battle or a race, and the hundred years past is long enough for us of the South to have been content with a speed that the rest of the civilized world has left behind. The tortoise won in the race with the hare, the race didn't win itself. We have listened far too much already to those who teach the safety of being slow. "*Make*

haste slowly" is the true emphasis. Cannot these lovers of maxims appreciate that "Delays are dangerous"? For we have a case before us wherein there is all danger and no safety in floating with the tide.¹⁹

What Shall the Negro Do?

What shall the Negro do? For, as matters stand, it seems only too probable that until the Negro does something further, nothing further will be done.... What can—what shall—the Negro do?

You can make the most of the liberty you have. You have large liberty of speech, much freedom of the press, of petition, of organization, of public meeting, liberty to hold property, to prosecute civil and criminal lawsuits, a perfect freedom to use the mails, and a certain—or must we say an uncertain—freedom of the ballot. All these are inestimable liberties, and have been, and are being, used by you. But are they being used faithfully to their utmost extent?

Freedom of public organization, for instance. From the earliest days of his emancipation the Negro has shown a zest and gift for organization, and today his private, public and secret societies, which cost him money to maintain, have thousands of members. Yet only here and there among them is there a club for the advocacy and promotion of his civil rights....

You can as urgently claim the liberty to perform all your civil duties as the liberty to enjoy all your civil rights. The two must be sought at the same time and by the same methods. They should never be divided. You must feel and declare yourself no longer the nation's, much less any political party's, still less your old master's, mere nurseling; but one bound by the duties of citizenship to study, and actively seek, all men's rights, and the public welfare of the nation, and of every lesser community—State, county, city, village—to which he belongs. Nothing else can so

hasten the acquisition of all your rights as for you to make it plain that your own rights and welfare are not all you are striving for, but that you are, at least equally with the white man, the student of your individual duty toward every public question in the light of the general good.

Holding this attitude, you can make many things clear, concerning the cause of civil rights, that greatly need to be made so. For instance, that this cause is not merely yours, but is a great fundamental necessity of all free government, in which every American citizen is interested, knowing that they who neglect to defend any principle of liberty may well expect to lose its substance....

You can proclaim what you do not want.... There are tens of thousands of intelligent people who today unwittingly exaggerate the demands made by and in behalf of the Negro into a vast and shapeless terror. Neither he, his advocates, nor his opponents have generally realized how widely his claims have been, sometimes by and sometimes without intention, misconstrued. He needs still to make innumerable reiterations of facts that seem to him too plain for repetition; as, for example, that he does not want "Negro supremacy," or any supremacy save that of an intelligent and upright minority, be it white, black, or both, ruling, out of office, by the sagacity of their counsels and their loyalty to the common good, and in office by the choice of the majority of the whole people; that, as to private society, he does not want any man's company who does not want his; or that, as to suffrage, he does not want to vote solidly, unless he must in order to maintain precious rights and duties denied to, and only to, him and all his....

You must keep your vote alive. This means several things. It means that, without venality or servility, you must hold your vote up for the honorable competitive bid of political parties. A vote which one party can count on as a matter of course, and the opposite party cannot hope to win at any price, need expect nothing from either. In

no campaign ought the Negro to know *certainly* how he will vote before he has seen both platforms and weighed the chances of their words being made good. You will never get your rights until the white man does not know how you are going to vote. You must let him see that the "Negro vote" can divide whenever it may, and come together solidly whenever it must. . . .

Last, keeping the vote alive means casting it. You must vote. You must practically recognize two facts, which if white men had not recognized in their own case long ago, you would be in slavery still today: that there is an enormous value in having votes cast; first, even though they cannot win, and secondly, even though they are not going to be counted. A good cause and a stubborn fight are a combination almost as good as victory itself; better than victory without them; the seed of certain victory at last. Even if you have to cope with fraud, make it play its infamous part so boldly and so fast that it shall work its own disgrace and destruction, as many a time it has done before Negroes ever voted. Vote! Cast your vote though taxed for it. Cast your vote though defrauded of it, as many a white man is today. Cast your vote though you die for it. . . . Keep your vote alive; better nine free men than ten half free. In most of the Southern States the Negro vote has been diminishing steadily for years, to the profound satisfaction of those white men whose suicidal policy it is to keep you in alienism. In the name of the dead, black and white, of the living, and of your children yet unborn, not as of one party or another, but as American freemen, vote! For in this free land the people that do not vote do not get and do not deserve their rights.

And you must spend your own money. No full use of the liberties you now have can be made without cooperation, however loose that cooperation may have to be; and no cooperation can be very wide, active, or effective without the use of money. This tax cannot be laid anywhere upon a few purses. Falling upon many, it will rest too lightly to

be counted a burden. White men may and should help to bear it; but if so, then all the more the Negro must spend his own money. . . .

Money is essential, especially for two matters. First, for the stimulation, publication, and wide distribution of a literature of the facts, equities, and exigencies of the Negro question in all its practical phases. . . . And, secondly, money is essential for the unofficial, unpartisan, prompt, and thorough investigation and exposure of crimes against civil and political rights. . . .

There is a strong line of cleavage already running through the white part of the population in every Southern State. On one side of the line the trend of conviction is toward the establishment of the common happiness and security through the uplifting of the whole people by the widest possible distribution of moral effects and wealth-producing powers. It favors, for example, the expansion of the public school system, and is strongest among men of professional callings and within sweep of the influence of colleges and universities. It antagonizes such peculiar institutions as the infamous convict-lease system with that system's enormous political powers. It condemns corrupt elections at home or abroad. It revolts against the absolutism of political parties. In a word, it stands distinctively for the New South of American ideas, including the idea of material development, as against a New South with no ideas except that of material development for the aggrandizement of the few, and the holding of the whole Negro race in the South to a servile public status, cost what it may to justice, wealth, or morals. Let the Negro, in every State and local issue, strive with a dauntless perseverance intelligently, justly, and honorably to make his vote at once too cheap and too valuable for the friends of justice and a common freedom to despise it or allow their enemies to suppress it. Remember, your power in the nation at large must always be measured almost entirely by your power in your own State.

And finally, you must see the power and necessity of individual thought and action . . . how are public sentiment and action, in the main, shaped? By the supremacy of individual minds; by the powers of intellect, will, argument, and persuasion vested by nature in a few individuals here and there . . . every such individual worth from a hundred to a hundred thousand votes. Without this element and without its recognition there is little effective power even in organized masses.²⁰

Federal Aid to Education

. . . I certainly think the National Government should make appropriations for public schools in destitute parts of the country, at least in the South. On the general principle I have made in my own mind these points: First, that the constitutionality of national aid to public education is not the question that properly comes first in order. The nation should first ask itself, "Do we in this direction owe a national debt?" for if so, there *must be*, and we are bound in honor and common honesty to find, some constitutional way to liquidate it. If we owed a debt to a foreign nation, we should cut a sorry figure pleading that we could not make it constitutional to pay it. Shall we not treat our own citizens as well as we would have to treat the citizens of a foreign government?

I think we are confronted here with a distinctly national debt. The educational destitution in the South, so contrary to our American scheme of social order, is distinctly the result of gross defects in that social order inevitably accompanying the institutional establishment of African slavery. It was certainly the Nation's crime. . . .

It is true that the Southern States could do more for public education if they would, and he is no friend of the South who flatters her people into a delusion that they are doing all they can. . . . But the supreme fact is not that the South is or is not doing all it can for public education. It

is that hundreds and thousands of children, white and black, as the result of the Nation's crime, of which they are the innocent victims, are growing up in an ignorance more pauperizing than education, however paid for. . . .

I do not consider the education of the lower masses in the South a cure for all the ills of Southern Society, but I fail to see how they can be cured without it, and I fail to see any excellence in the policy that is content to withhold it. . . .

Whatever we say with regard to the illiteracy of the blacks in the South applies to the illiteracy of the whites also, since they are both the fruit of the same tree, whose root drew its nourishment from a moral error as wide as the nation.²¹

Political Measures

The only alternative I see, a hope of whose adoption can rightly postpone Federal intervention any longer, is for the Democratic party of the North and West to withdraw its support from the Southern policy now, as it did in 1860. . . .

During these two years and one-half [until the election of 1892] let it be made yet plainer than ever before, that Federal intervention is no willing choice of the Republican, or any party, and that what it, with the whole nation most covets for every Southern State is as large, as full, as universal, and as prosperous a self-government as can be found in any part of this Union. And then, in all kindness, for the South's own sake as much as for the sake of any, in the name of the common welfare and the nation's honor, let the word be spoken, that if by 1892 any State in this Union has not at least begun, with a good show of completing, the establishment of equal American rights for all Americans, the men of this nation who, in whatever party, believe in free government first will strain their every nerve and sinew to give the nation a president

and a Congress that will establish it peaceably, promptly, and forever.

The day in which this is done, whether by a Southern majority's own motion or by the Government's intervention, will be a great birthday. It may date the birth of a better peace, a wider, richer prosperity, a happier freedom of every citizen, and a freer, purer government of this Union and of every State in this Union, than this continent has ever yet seen. Yes, and complete fraternity between North and South. For it shall not have been long ere the whole South will rejoice in the day of its doing as now it rejoices in the day when Lincoln freed the Negro, and in the day when Washington, by spurning the offer of royal rank and authority, declared that the only road to pure government is free government.²²

The South's Own Responsibility

What need to say more? The question is answered. Is the freedman a free man? No. We have considered his position in a land whence nothing can, and no man has a shadow of right to drive him, and where he is being multiplied as only oppression can multiply a people. . . . Without accepting one word of his testimony, we have shown that the laws made for his protection against the habits of suspicion and oppression in his late master are being constantly set aside, not for their defects, but for such merit as they possess. We have shown that the very natural source of these oppressions is the surviving sentiments of an extinct and now univerrally execrated institution; sentiments which no intelligent or moral people should harbor a moment after the admission that slavery was a moral mistake. We have shown the outrageousness of these tyrannies in some of their workings, and how distinctly they antagonize every State and national interest involved in the elevation of the colored race. Is it not well to have done so? For, I say again, the question has reached a moment of special

importance. The South stands on her honor before the clean equities of the issue. It is no longer whether constitutional amendments, but whether the eternal principles of justice, are violated. And the answer must—it shall—come from the South. And it shall be practical. It will not cost much. We have had a strange experience: The withholding of simple rights has cost much blood; such concessions of them as we have made have never yet cost a drop.

And yet you know and I know we belong to communities that after years of hoping for, are at last taking comfort in the assurance of the nation's highest courts that no law can reach and stop this shameful foul play until we choose to enact a law to that end ourselves. And now the east and north and west of our great and prosperous and happy country, and the rest of the civilized world, as far as it knows our case, are standing and waiting to see what we will write upon the white page of today's and tomorrow's history, now that we are simply on our honor and on the mettle of our far and peculiarly famed Southern instinct. How long, then, shall we stand off from such ringing moral questions as these on the flimsy plea that they have a political value, and, scrutinizing the Constitution, keep saying, "Is it so nominated in the bond? I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond." ²³

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- ¹⁰ "The Negro Question" (1888), in *The Negro Question*.
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