

NEGRO CRIMINALITY

BY

WALTER F. WILLCOX

Of Cornell University

CHIEF STATISTICIAN IN THE CENSUS OFFICE

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN SOCIAL
SCIENCE ASSOCIATION AT SARATOGA,
SEPTEMBER 6, 1899

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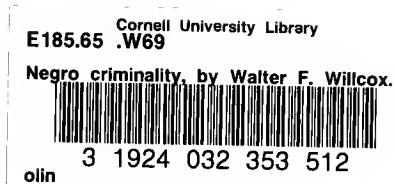
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"TOUT COMPRENDRE,—C'EST TOUT PARDONNER"

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PREFACE.

The right of one born and reared almost within sight of Bunker Hill to speak on the negro question may perhaps be challenged. Yet one who knows the passions aroused by the Civil War only through hearsay, and the negroes mainly through type and as a college teacher, gains a remoteness and perspective that should help him to be fair-minded, clear-sighted and outspoken. In some quarters, too, a Northern student may get credit for these qualities more easily than a Southerner or a man of affairs, and contribute his mite to the formation of public opinion.

In preparing my manuscript for the printer, I have made full citation of authorities, being willing to risk the appearance of pedantry, if thereby I might aid any one to find the main sources of my information. I have been greatly aided by correspondents, especially in the South, all of whom have answered the inquiries of a stranger with the utmost courtesy; and I gladly take this opportunity to express my grateful thanks to Mr. Leroy Daniel, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, Mrs. T. M. Greene, Dr. George H. Hepworth, ex-Governor W. J. Northen, Mayor G. L. Simpson, and Booker T. Washington. In gathering from the pages of the *Atlanta Constitution* the facts regarding the events at Palmetto, Ga., I have been much aided by Miss Kathleen Connor.

WALTER F. WILLCOX.

CENSUS OFFICE, Oct. 30, 1899.

NEGRO CRIMINALITY.

The number of prisoners in the United States was reported at the last census, showing those of African descent and those of pure white blood. In the Southern States there were six white prisoners to every ten thousand whites and twenty-nine negro prisoners to every ten thousand negroes.* This seems to indicate that the liability of an American negro to commit crime is several times as great as the liability of a white. But those who are unwilling to admit this inference sometimes urge that the judicial system of the South is almost entirely in the hands of the whites, and that it is not administered with impartiality to the two races. They claim that a negro is convicted, on the average, upon less evidence than is required to convict a member of the dominant race; that, if found guilty, he is less likely to escape prison by paying a fine; and that, if both are imprisoned, the negro is likely to receive a longer sentence for a like offence. To meet these objections to the entire satisfaction of the person raising them would probably be difficult or impossible, and so, for the sake of my argument, let me for the moment admit their validity. If one thinks they furnish an adequate explanation of the large number of negro prisoners in the South, he may be asked whether they lie also in the North. Does it take less evidence to convict a negro here, or is a negro's sentence for the same offence likely to be longer? Such a claim has never to my knowledge been raised. Yet in the Northern States, in 1890, there were twelve white prisoners to every ten thousand whites, and sixty-nine negro prisoners to every ten thousand negroes. In our own State of New York the negroes, in proportion to their numbers, contributed over five times as many as the whites to the prison population. These facts furnish some statistical basis and warrant for the popular opinion, never seriously contested, that under present conditions in this country a member of the African race, other things equal, is much more likely to fall into crime than a member of

* Eleventh Census, "Crime, Pauperism, and Benevolence," i: 125 and ii: 3.

the white race. This is the unanimous opinion of the Southern whites, and is conceded by representative negroes. Thus, among the resolutions adopted by the Negro Conference at Hampton, Va., in July, 1898, was the admission * that "the criminal record of the colored race in all parts of the country is alarming in its proportions."

The negro prisoners in the Southern States to ten thousand negroes increased between 1880 and 1890 twenty-nine per cent, while the white prisoners to ten thousand whites increased only eight per cent.† Here, again, to the obvious inference that crime is increasing among the negroes much faster than among the whites, the same objection is sometimes raised, namely, that prejudice against that race is so influential in the South as to invalidate the argument. The same appeal as before to the figures for the North and West constitutes a convincing reply to any such contention. In the States where slavery was never established, the white prisoners increased seven per cent faster than the white population, while the negro prisoners increased no less than thirty-nine per cent faster than the negro population. Thus the increase of negro criminality, so far as it is reflected in the number of prisoners, exceeded the increase of white criminality more in the North than it did in the South. To bring the facts home, I may add that for New York State in 1880 there were sixteen white prisoners to every ten thousand white population; and in 1890 the proportion has risen to eighteen. But the negro prisoners of the State in 1880 were seventy-seven, and in 1890 one hundred to every ten thousand negroes. These figures serve to show both the higher rate and the more rapid increase of negro criminality, and in both respects New York is a fair type of the conditions elsewhere in the country. In these figures one finds again some statistical basis for the well-nigh universal opinion that crime among the American negroes is increasing with alarming rapidity.‡

* Hampton Negro Conference, No. 2, p. 11.

† Compare preceding citation from the Eleventh Census with the Tenth Census, xxi: p. 479.

‡ The serious difficulties in the way of comparing the criminal tendencies of different classes by inferences drawn from the statistics of prisoners are ably stated by R. P. Falkner, "Crime and the Census" (in *Annals American Academy*, January, 1897). I do not believe that his objections vitiate my inferences in the guarded way in which they have been stated. While the statistics of prisoners in one way which he has pointed out exaggerate the criminal tendencies of negroes, yet a comparison between the prisoners and persons of all ages tends to understate the true criminality of a race, a disproportionate number of which are children, and so under the criminal age. These two obstacles to accuracy in quantitative statements of the amount or increase of crime thus tend to neutralize each other.

In further support of this conclusion, I may quote the concession of the negro who is perhaps doing as much as any member of his race to throw light upon its present condition. Professor DuBois, of Atlanta University, in a recent address before the Negro Academy, said: * "The Negro Academy ought to sound a note of warning that would echo in every black cabin in the land. Unless we conquer our present vices, they will conquer us. We are diseased, we are developing criminal tendencies, and an alarmingly large percentage of our men and women are sexually impure."

Let us grant, then, that there is a large amount and a rapid increase of negro crime in the United States. This gives rise to a serious practical problem,—How may this amount be reduced or at least the increase checked? The answer to that largely depends upon the answer to a more theoretical question, which will define my theme this morning,—What are the causes of negro crime? If those causes can be detected and removed or counter-acting causes set at work, the practical problem will have been advanced towards solution.

The criminal is one who refuses to obey the laws of the community in which he lives. Such obedience to the law in the face of temptation is not an instinct or birthright, but a product of training, and in the great majority of instances that training is obtained in the family. The primary cause of crime, therefore, is defective family life and training. Hence crime is most common during the years just after a child has passed out of the control of the family, and while he is finding himself ill-adapted by his past training to the new sphere of life. In proportion to population of the same age, the prisoners between twenty and thirty are much more numerous than those of any earlier or later age period; † and, if the date of committing the first crime could be ascertained,—and that is the important time,—the juvenile character of our criminal population would appear yet more clearly. This youthfulness in comparison with the population outside is characteristic of all classes of prisoners, but pre-eminently of the negroes,‡—a fact which tends in a measure to confirm the frequent statement that negro criminals spring especially from the rising generation. If that be so, a further increase of negro criminality

* W. E. B. DuBois, "The Conservation of Races," p. 14 (in *American Negro Academy, Occasional Papers*, No. 2).

† Eleventh Census, "Crime, Pauperism, and Benevolence," i: 163.

‡ *Idem*, i: 167.

in the future is probable, and this probability renders the situation still more serious.

Under the slavery régime the negro had a feeble family life, much of the responsibility for the proper rearing of the family falling upon the master. The emancipated slaves have not been able in a single generation of freedom to develop or to imitate that family life which it has cost the whites many centuries to acquire. The difficulty is the more serious because to-day the conditions of civilized life do not foster the family virtues as they have done in the past. The white race is living on its inherited capital of family organization and responsibilities; the negroes have no such capital, but must acquire it, and that speedily, if the race is to survive.

What is the most effective safeguard against crime that the family furnishes the son or daughter? Not education, not even direct moral or religious training. The negro and the injudicious among his friends too often look on education and religion as fetiches, that is, something external, the possession of which guarantees the possessor a charmed and happy life here or hereafter. In distinction from these, the most effective safeguard against crime which parents can offer to their children is the desire and ability to support one's self by legitimate industry. A formal education is subsidiary to this; it is important mainly because it increases the avenues through which self-support is possible. If ever it serves to decrease the desire for self-support, it is to that extent baneful. If ever it decreases the recognized avenues for self-support by arousing the belief that certain lines of legitimate industry are degrading and therefore inadmissible, it is to that extent baneful. This may give a standpoint from which to judge the difficult question of negro education. If the negro family on the average is far less effective than the white, the education provided for negro children should aim frankly to supplement the shortcomings of their family life and reduce their temptations to crime by increasing their desire and ability to live by legitimate industry. Probably the best means by which to reach and re-enforce the family life of the negroes is a school system which frankly sets this up as its aim.

A closely related series of causes for negro crime may be grouped as *industrial*. Under the compulsory co-operation of slavery, little competition between the two races was possible.

Manual labor in many pursuits, notably those of agriculture, was deemed by the whites servile and degrading. Since the war this motive for the white man to avoid field-work or other forms of manual labor has diminished in importance, and he has gradually entered upon tasks which before the war were closed to him by the pressure of social sentiment. In ceasing to be master he has become competitor, and to the pressure of this competition not a little negro crime must be attributed.

Hence it is no digression to invite your attention for a few moments to some evidence of the increasing competition between the two races. The staple crops upon which the negroes were occupied before the war were probably cotton, tobacco, sugar and rice. In 1860 the great mass of the work in the *cotton* fields was done by negro labor. White labor was used, to be sure, in Texas, but at that time the whole cotton crop of Texas was less than one-twelfth of the country's product.* It would probably be a conservative statement to say that at least four-fifths of the cotton was then grown by the negroes. The only official estimate for any date since that time is that of the Statistician to the Department of Agriculture in 1876.† He concluded that about three-fifths of our cotton was raised in that year by negroes. At the present time probably not one-half is thus grown. In 1859 Texas produced one-twelfth, in 1897-98 one-fourth, ‡ of the cotton of the United States; and, as in that State white labor is usually employed in the cotton fields, the advance of Texas means the advance of white agricultural labor.

Similar changes have been going on in the *tobacco* crop. In 1859 twenty-eight per cent of it was grown in Virginia, and mainly, it seems, by negro labor. In 1889 less than ten per cent of our crop was grown in that State, and the Virginia crop of that year was less than two-fifths of what it had been thirty years before. In 1889 Kentucky produced over forty-five per cent of the tobacco of the country, while ten years earlier it produced only thirty-six per cent. American tobacco growing evidently is tending to centre in Kentucky, and yet it is the only Southern State in which the number of negroes decreased during the last decade. In over half its counties and in the State as a whole, the negro population decreased while the white increased between 1880 and

* Eleventh Census, Abstract, 122-125.

† Department of Agriculture, Report, 1876, p. 136.

‡ Department of Agriculture, Year Book, 1898, p. 683.

1890.* It seems that tobacco growing, like cotton growing, is passing more and more into the hands of the whites. Some light upon this change may be derived from a passage in the last Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture:† “The tobacco business has become very highly specialized. Each market has its own requirements, each class of users has its own particular style, and each season brings some change of style which must be met by the tobacco grower. There is a great deal of competition in our own country, and very serious competition from abroad. . . . To meet this competition, it is absolutely necessary that our farmers should have at their disposal a thorough knowledge of their own conditions, and of the conditions of the soil, climate, methods, and labor conditions of competing districts.”

Of the cane *sugar* crop of the United States in 1889, over ninety-seven per cent came from Louisiana; and the increase of yield in the preceding decade was almost confined to that State, where the acreage under cane increased seven per cent and the yield forty-two per cent.‡ Apparently, the increase of yield in the last ten years, notwithstanding the losses resulting from recent federal legislation, has been quite as rapid. In a paper read in 1898 before the Louisiana Agricultural Society the statement was made § that this rapid increase in the production of cane sugar was “due especially to the establishment of large central factories.” The machinery in these factories is managed, I am informed, almost entirely by white men.

With regard to the *rice* crop of the country, in 1879 less than one-fourth of the acreage was in Louisiana, in 1889 over one-half was there. || During the last decade the acreage outside Louisiana decreased forty-two per cent, while that within the State more than doubled. In this, as in other staple agricultural industries, there has been a marked tendency towards concentration; and the centre of production has passed away from South Carolina, which in 1849 produced three-fourths of our crop, but in 1889 less than one-fourth. This transfer of the rice growing industry is largely due to the superior efficiency of white labor. A pamphlet distributed

* Eleventh Census, Abstract, p. 40; and Population, i: 412. ff.

† Department of Agriculture, Year Book, 1898, p. 42, f.

‡ Eleventh Census, Abstract, 126-128.

§ State Agricultural Society. Proceedings, Twelfth Session, p. 117 (in Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture, Biennial Report, 1898).

|| Eleventh Census, Abstract, 130-133.

at the Louisiana Building during the World's Fair in 1893 and thus given apparently official indorsement, says: Not long since the Carolinas raised the rice of the United States, and the delta of the Mississippi the rice of Louisiana, all done by colored labor. The immigration agent of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company induced the men of the Northwest to come into southwestern Louisiana, bringing their improved farm machinery. They supplanted the hook and sickle then in use by twine-binding harvesters, of which many hundred are now employed in the Louisiana rice fields; and this machinery is handled by white men.* Corroborative evidence is found in a recent paper read before the Louisiana Agricultural Society, which states that there are now in the rice fields of Louisiana nearly five thousand selfbinding harvesters with steam threshers by the hundred, and that artificial irrigation employing steam pumps has been introduced on a large scale.†

From all the evidence obtainable it seems clear that Southern agriculture is become increasingly diversified, and is demanding and receiving a constantly increasing amount of industry, energy and intelligence,—characteristics which the whites more generally possess or more readily develop.

Some evidence upon the lack of industry of negro farmers in the black belt of Alabama may be derived from a recent Bulletin of the United States Department of Agriculture dealing with their food. Eighteen families near Tuskegee, Alabama, were selected as typical and studied by officials of the department in co-operation with representatives of the Tuskegee Normal Institute. The agent of the Department reported: "The negro farmer generally works about seven and a half months during the year. . . . The rest of the time is devoted to visiting, social life, revivals, or other religious exercises, and to absolute idleness. Few farmers work on Saturday even during the busy season of cotton-picking."‡

The same study gives evidence of the poor food supply of the negro farmers. In the diet of the average negro family the amount of protein—that is, of the material needed to form blood, muscle and bone, and to make up for the wear and tear of the

* Southwest Louisiana on the Line of the Southern Pacific Company, pp. 45, f.

† State Agricultural Society. Proceedings, Twelfth Session, p. 39 (in Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture, Biennial Report, 1898).

‡ Department of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations, Bulletin 38, "Dietary Studies with Reference to the Food of the Negro in Alabama," p. 18.

bodily machine — was from one-third to three-fourths that which has been found in the diet of well-fed American whites, and “no larger than has been found in the diet of the very poor factory operatives and laborers in Germany and the laborers and beggars in Italy.”*

In agricultural pursuits the competition between whites and blacks can be traced more clearly than elsewhere, because in that field we have fuller information. Still there is some evidence, derived mainly from statements of educated negroes, that in *other occupations*, also, this competition is seriously felt.

Thus Professor Hugh M. Browne, of Washington, said, in a speech five years ago to a negro audience: White men are bringing science and art into menial occupations and lifting them beyond our reach. In my boyhood the household servants were colored, but now in the establishments of the four hundred one finds trained white servants. Then the walls and ceilings were whitewashed each spring by colored men; now they are decorated by skilled white artisans. Then the carpets were beaten by colored men; now this is done by a white man, managing a steam carpet-cleaning works. Then laundry work was done by negroes; now they are with difficulty able to manage the new labor-saving machinery.†

Similar testimony comes from another negro, Mr. Fortune, editor of an influential negro paper. He said in 1897: “When I left Florida for Washington twenty years ago, every brakeman, every engineer and almost every man working on the railroad was a black man. To-day a black man can hardly get a job at any avocation. This is because the fathers did not educate their children along the lines in which they were working, and, as a consequence, the race is losing its grip on the industries that are the bone and sinew of life.”‡ At the same conference Mr. Fitch, the field missionary of Hampton Normal Institute, reported that he found the old men everywhere working at the trades they learned in slavery, but nowhere did he find young men learning these trades.§ Similarly, Principal Frissell, in the opening address, said: “There is great danger that the colored people will be pushed out of the occupations that were once theirs, because white tradesmen are coming in to fill their places.”|| This competition between the

* Department of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations, Bulletin 38, “Dietary Studies with Reference to the Food of the Negro in Alabama,” p. 68.

† Reported in *A. M. E. Zion Church Quarterly* for April, 1894.

‡ *Southern Workman and Hampton School Record*, September, 1897, p. 179.

§ *Idem*, p. 168.

|| *Idem*, p. 167.

racism is accentuated by the trade-union policy of exclusion, which often denies negroes the right of membership in labor organizations, and then opposes the employment of non-unionists, the net result of which is to antagonize the entry or continuance of negroes in the field of skilled labor.*

Every improvement in agriculture or industry anywhere tending to lower the price of a staple product is a spur to former producers. They must meet the situation by economies of production or economies of consumption, by improving their own methods or by living on a smaller return. Those who are sanguine of the future of the negro in the United States usually rest their case upon the evidence of negro progress since emancipation, measured against some assumed absolute standard. They point to a decreasing illiteracy, to accumulations of property, to a decreasing death rate, etc. But the test which the race has to face is the test of relative efficiency. If they are to hold their own in this country, they must improve as fast as the whites, and the progress of the Southern whites since emerging from the dark shadows of slavery, the war and reconstruction is one of the marvels of present history.

Partly under the stress of this competition to which the negroes are being subjected, partly as a natural result of their emancipation, they are gradually drawing apart into social classes. The successful families refuse to associate with those who morally and industrially are stationary or retrogressive. Dr. DuBois has recently made a valuable report on the members of his race living at a small county seat in the Virginia tobacco district. About 260 negro families were studied, of which 40 belonged to the higher class, 170 to the middle, and perhaps 50 to the lower. He describes the members of the lower class as "below the line of ordinary respectability, living in loose sexual relationship, respon-

* As these pages are going to press, the preliminary report of the Third Hampton Conference brings confirmatory evidence on this point. The Committee on Business and Labor reported on the condition of negro skilled labor in certain large cities. Of Richmond, Va., they say: "Perhaps two thousand are employed in the iron works. This branch of business was at one time controlled almost entirely by colored men, but now they are employed chiefly as common laborers, with only here and there a master mechanic." The general trend of the report is summed up as follows: "The trade-unions along the border line of slavery have generally pursued a policy of exclusiveness on account of color, and refused to include the colored craftsmen in their scheme of organization. . . . In the North colored men, when competent, are generally received into local unions and treated fairly. In the South they work side by side, when not organized. When organization takes place, the colored workman as a rule is excluded." *Southern Workman*, September, 1899, pp. 333, f. Meagre evidence from other sources does not confirm the above statement so far as it applies to the attitude of Northern trade-unions.

sible for most of the illegitimate children, and furnishing a half-dozen street walkers and numerous gamblers and rowdies. They are not particularly vicious and quarrelsome, but rather shiftless and debauched. Laziness and promiscuous sexual intercourse are their besetting sins."* In other words, this class lacks the family virtues and the industrial virtues which have made the white man what he is. It may be styled potentially criminal. A class of such people is found, to be sure, in every civilized country, but in our Southern States the proportion of this potentially criminal class is abnormally and dangerously large. About one-fifth of the negro families or over one-tenth of the total population in Farmville are assigned by Professor DuBois to this group. This growing social stratification of the negroes makes all efforts to judge them as a race rather than by classes, localities, or even individuals, increasingly unjust and irritating to them.

The strenuous and increasing industrial competition between the two races often results in local displacement of colored labor. The negro cotton grower, unable to live on the decreasing return from his land, gives place to another tenant, white or black, and the former family drifts away. The current of negroes to the cities is somewhat greater than that of whites and seems to consist of two classes, those who have earned a promotion to city life by their success in the country or small town, and those who have failed in country life and flow cityward to live on their neighbors or by their wits. Neighbors and pickings are more numerous in an urban community. This negro driftwood is likely to feel sore towards the whites. The latter are held responsible for the organization of society, and their fault it is if the negro can find in it no place for himself. They cared for him in slavery, and either their old masters or their new emancipators are bound to furnish him a chance for a livelihood. He is a voiceless socialist. Hence this driftwood belongs to the potentially criminal class.

A third group of causes leading to a large amount and rapid increase of negro crime may be embraced under the loose term *race friction*. All witnesses agree that since emancipation the two races have separated more and more in life and thought. Ex-Governor Northen, in his recent address at Boston, seems to attribute this to the national policy towards the South during the reconstruction period.† We may agree with him in part and still

* The Negroes of Farmville, Va., p. 37 (in Department of Labor Bulletin, January, 1898).

† W. J. Northen, The Negro at the South, p. 7.

believe, as I do, that the industrial competition just sketched was probably inevitable, and is another important factor in drawing the races apart. But, whatever be the explanation, the fact is undeniable. Under the slavery system the main motives in governing the negroes were personal loyalty and force, and the emphasis upon one or the other varied with the character of the work and of the owner or overseer. As the races have drawn apart, this feeling of personal loyalty has become feeble, and many of the whites have felt that the only alternative mode of governing the increasing number of criminals was force, and that the more speedily and surely force could be applied the greater its deterrent influence.

But, as the negroes have separated from the whites, they have drawn or been crowded together, and have come to feel a race unity and race pride, and are developing a race public opinion which may prove of great importance in controlling the negro criminal class. The existence of this negro public opinion, as distinct from that of the whites, is hardly recognized with sufficient clearness by the dominant race, and to illustrate it the argument must be amplified. This can best be done by the aid of a typical instance, and I have selected for the purpose the series of recent events at Palmetto, Ga., culminating in the death of Sam Hose.*

Palmetto is a town of perhaps six hundred people in a county which contains no place of much greater size. About two-thirds of the county's population are negro. In the early morning of Tuesday, Jan. 24, 1899, a fire broke out in the centre of the town, destroying the hotel, two stores and a storehouse, and seriously threatening half the town. Some citizens moved out their goods, through fear that the fire would spread, and in this way they, too, suffered losses. There was little insurance on the property destroyed, and the contemporary newspaper account † throws no light upon the place of origin or the cause of the fire. On the following Saturday morning, not long after midnight, a second fire occurred, by which twelve property holders suffered serious losses. These fires together destroyed nearly all of the two business blocks in the town. The second was clearly incendiary, for in another block a fire was found the same night kindled against the

* My information has been gleaned from a file of the *Atlanta Daily Constitution*, the only Atlanta daily paper of which the current issues are accessible in the Library of Congress, and from correspondents both white and colored, in the North and in the South.

† *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 25, 1899, p. 3, col. 5.

outside of a store.* The Atlanta *Constitution* of March 17 says that two other fires occurred in the same town during February, but I have found no contemporary mention of them in the columns of that journal, and am uncertain whether the statement is correct. A reward was offered for the detection of the incendiaries, but for some weeks all efforts to ferret them out were fruitless.

About the middle of March evidence was obtained implicating nine negroes. An editor of an Atlanta daily paper, who made a special investigation of the facts after the terrible climax, has written me that the evidence against the negroes consisted in a conversation overheard by a reputable white citizen while in hiding under the house of a negro, and in a confession of the ring-leader. The negroes were arrested, placed under a guard of six white men, and confined for the night of March 15 in a warehouse at Palmetto to await trial the next morning. A negro at Atlanta, who also had made a special effort to get at the facts, reported to me that the nine had been examined, released for lack of evidence, and subsequently rearrested. I find no confirmatory evidence of this, and it seems almost certainly incorrect. At the same time I am confident that my informant, who is an impartial and judicious man, believed it. In that case the two stories illustrate the conflicting accounts accepted even by conservative members of the two races.

Soon after midnight a masked mob of perhaps fifteen men † pushed open the door of the warehouse, ordered the guards to throw up their hands, and fired two volleys into the nine negroes, killing four, seriously wounding two, slightly wounding two, and leaving one unharmed. Although the Governor of Georgia offered the largest reward allowed by law, five hundred dollars, for the arrest of the first member of the mob and one hundred dollars for that of each additional member, no one of the criminals was detected. They were said to have come from a distance, but the evidence warrants the conclusion that they probably came from Palmetto or its immediate vicinity. For the indignation over the fires was most intense in that community, and, furthermore, the confession of the negro leader, apparently the immediate cause of the lynching, was made so shortly before, that the news of it could hardly have spread very far

* Atlanta *Constitution*, Jan. 29, 1899, p. 4, col. 4. † Idem, March 17, 1899, p. 1, col. 1.

through the scattered population of that region.* As the motives to disclaim responsibility for the action of the mob were obvious and strong, the local statements denying complicity can hardly be given great weight. If this view of the probabilities be accepted, it throws light upon the action or inaction of the guards. The negro interpretation of their conduct is that they were dummies, aware that the lynching party was coming, and sympathizing with its action. The whites do not admit this, and yet even they, if the *Atlanta Constitution* may be deemed their spokesman, felt the guards' conduct to be suspicious. Note the questions asked editorially by that paper: "What was the guard there for? Were the guardsmen asleep while on duty? What became of their guns while the assailants were shooting down their prisoners? These are questions which should be answered, though it is hard to conceive what answer can be given."†

Whether any members of the mob of lynchers were recognized by the negroes who survived, it seems impossible to tell. According to newspaper accounts the mask was torn from the face of one, and the leader spoke in giving orders to his followers. Undoubtedly, however, many negroes believed, rightly or wrongly, that members of the squad had been recognized.

Four weeks later, in the immediate vicinity of Palmetto, Alfred Cranford was killed by a negro, Sam Hose, and ten days after Hose was put to death by a white mob. So far, and only so far, all accounts agree, but two widely different stories of the accompanying events have been printed, one coming from the whites, the other from the negroes. I may review and criticise the two narratives in detail. For the negro version the sources are the report of a detective sent by Northern negroes to investigate the facts. This was printed both in the *New York Age* of June 22 and in briefer form as a letter by Mr. Fortune, the editor of the *Age*, in the *New York Sun* of June 20. In regard to the events prior to the killing of Cranford, these accounts say that "one or two barns or houses had been burned" at Palmetto, and that the nine colored men arrested "were not men of bad character, but quite the reverse." The incorrectness of the former statement has already been shown; that the latter is equally inaccurate appears from the county records of Campbell County, which show that four of the nine had been indicted, the leader five times, another

* "It is practically certain now that the news of the confession, which spread quickly throughout the town, brought on the mob yesterday morning." *Idem*, p. 2, col. 2.

† *Idem*, March 18, 1899, p. 4, col. 2.

for burglary, and two for misdemeanors.* The negro story also states that Cranford was killed in the yard, and not in the house. To get light upon this radical difference in the two accounts, I wrote to the Atlanta editor, already mentioned, asking these questions: "Was the body of Alfred Cranford found in the supper room or in the yard?" He answered, "In the supper room." "Do you know this fact of your own knowledge or by testimony of others?" To this his reply was, "Blood showed position; eye-witnesses testified as to place." In addition to these errors of statement the negro version reads like a plea, and not an impartial balancing of evidence, and puts aside as untrustworthy the sworn testimony of Mrs. Cranford.

For these reasons, and others I need not stay to mention, I am compelled to reject what at the first I was disposed to accept,—this account of the events. Still, in some respects I cannot but believe that it suggests the probable facts. The version of the whites usually implies that lust was the main motive for the crimes of Sam Hose, and omits as irrelevant all reference to prior events at Palmetto,—a view which seems to me untenable. The lynching of the negroes charged with arson and the crime of Sam Hose were, perhaps, the most serious results of race friction that have appeared in Georgia of recent years. Assume that the first in no wise caused the second. In that case the chances against both occurring in the same small town and within four weeks of each other would be indefinitely small. I am compelled, therefore, to believe that the close proximity in space and time is evidence that the second was caused in part by the first. That is, the furious wrath kindled among the negroes of Palmetto by the lynchers was probably a potent influence upon the criminal nature of Sam Hose in bringing about his deed. The criminal nature and the special incentive re-enforced each other, and the result was a crime at which Georgia and the country stood aghast. The negro version, as set forth by a correspondent, says that Cranford was conspicuous in that region as "a nigger-hater," and was probably the leader of the party of lynchers four weeks before. Whether that be true or not, it seems likely that the dominant motive for the murder and rape was revenge. On this theory the stoical silence with which Hose bore his tortures, and the evident pride of the negroes in that silence, receive new meaning. It was the weapon whereby,

* *Idem*, March 18, 1899, p. 2, col. 3.

even in death, they felt that he triumphed over their enemies and his.

In the fate of Sam Hose as an individual, I have little interest. I believe the tortures he inflicted upon Mrs. Cranford by the murder of her husband, and in the hours that followed, were more terrible than those he suffered at the stake. But the point I would urge is that illegal execution of negroes by lynching, even when torture is added, has an inciting rather than a deterring influence upon the large number of potential criminals. I believe that the lynching of negroes at Palmetto tended to create the animosity out of which the crimes of Hose sprang, that the tortures and death of Hose tended to create the feeling out of which the crimes at Bainbridge, Darien, and elsewhere sprang. Along such a road one can see no end but a precipice.

During the Middle Ages such terrible events as have occurred sporadically at the South of recent years were frequent expressions of religious hatred. With the beginning of the sixteenth century, religious animosities receded into the background, and race animosities, resulting from the interpenetration of higher and lower races, came into prominence. The hatred between Catholic and Protestant in Europe appeared in the colonies as hatred between whites, reds and blacks. Powerful as these modern race passions are in the southern United States, they are, perhaps, stronger in the southern Philippines, where religious hatred and race hatred, the mediæval and the modern hate *par excellence*, concur and re-enforce each other. One may perhaps forecast the future increase of race hatred between the lower classes of the two races in the South, if the trend be not changed, by reflection upon the attitude of certain Mohammedan Malays towards Christian Caucasians in the Philippine Islands, as described by Professor Worcester.

"Finally, there was a rumor that a band of *juramentados* was about to attack the place. Now a *juramentado* is a most unpleasant sort of individual to encounter. The Moros believe that one who takes the life of a Christian thereby increases his chance of a good time in the world to come. The more Christians killed, the brighter the prospect for the future, and, if one is only fortunate enough to be himself killed while slaughtering the enemies of the faithful, he is at once transported to the seventh heaven.

"From time to time it happens that one of them wearies of this life, and, desiring to take the shortest road to glory, he bathes in

a sacred spring, shaves off his eyebrows, dresses in white, and presents himself to a *pandita* to take a solemn oath (*juramentar*) to die killing Christians. He then hides a *kris* or *barong* about his person or in something that he carries, and seeks the nearest town. If he can gain admission, he snatches his weapon from its concealment and runs amuck, slaying every living being in his path, until he is finally himself despatched. So long as the breath of life remains in him, he fights on.

"Eye-witnesses have repeatedly informed me that they have seen *juramentados* seize the barrel of a rifle, on being bayoneted, and drive the steel into themselves further, in order to bring the soldier at the other end of the piece within striking distance and cut him down.

"The number of lives taken by one of these mad fanatics is sometimes almost incredible, but he is eventually killed himself, and his relatives have a celebration when the news of his death reaches them. They always insist that, just as night is coming on they see him riding by on a white horse, bound for the abode of the blessed." *

The white Caucasians of the Philippines regard a *juramentado* as a peculiarly fiendish criminal; many of the brown Malays regard him as a saint and emulate his deeds. The white Caucasians of Georgia regard Sam Hose as a peculiarly fiendish criminal; many of the black Africans, I fear, regard him as an innocent man and a martyr. As this point is of much importance for my argument, and will not meet ready acceptance among those who, like myself, are convinced of his guilt, I offer all the evidence on both sides that I have secured.

I have talked with two negroes of national reputation and of the highest standing among the best members of both races. Each doubted that Sam Hose was guilty of rape, and yet neither was willing to express that doubt over his own name. A well-known representative of a Northern paper went South to report upon the facts, and during his investigation had a meeting with a dozen or more representative negroes of Atlanta, to get their point of view. Both by him and by another of those present I am assured that none of the negroes at the conference was convinced of the guilt of Sam Hose. To this evidence should be added that of the detective employed by the negroes, and probably reflecting their

* Worcester, *The Philippine Islands*, pp. 175, ff.

beliefs. On the other side the only important testimony that has reached me is contained in a letter from ex-Governor Atkinson, written shortly before his death: "I have delayed answering your inquiry, in order that I might talk with some of the white and colored people from that section of the county in a confidential way. . . . The investigation made by me satisfies me that there is no reason for the doubt expressed by you in your letter. The negroes with whom I have talked would have had no hesitancy in giving me the information asked for, as in each case I assured them that their names would not be used and that I did not wish their personal opinion, but wished to know what the other negroes thought. One of my informants was a negro client of mine, who is a well-to-do man living in that neighborhood, knows the opinion of the colored people, and I know would not hesitate to have told me that the negroes doubted Hose's guilt if such doubt had existed." Even this evidence, strong as it is, does not outweigh in my mind that on the other side. These negroes may have been unwilling to speak the truth even to Governor Atkinson upon a matter on which feeling was so tense, or they may have been representative of the class of negroes in close touch with the whites and more ready than others to derive their beliefs from that source, or it may be that in the negro community where the Cranfords and Sam Hose were known belief in his guilt is more prevalent than elsewhere. On the whole, therefore, I conclude that a large proportion of the negroes of Georgia do not share the belief of their white neighbors about the guilt of Sam Hose.

In a recent appeal to the people of Georgia the governor said: "Lynch law does not stop arson or murder or robbery or rape"; and the *Atlanta Constitution* said editorially: "The punishment of the criminals who are overtaken, no matter how swift or how bloody, seems to have no effect whatever on the criminal class among the negroes. They seem to go as cheerfully about their crimes as if they were candidates for a martyr's crown; they murder, ravish and rob with all the zeal and fervor of religious fanatics." These opinions testify to a growing disbelief among whites in the efficacy of lynch law as a deterrent. As force is failing, some other means must be enlisted in defence of civilization. In slavery days such crimes were almost unknown, and mainly because of the loyalty of the slaves to their owners. Any effort on the part of members of either race to break down those barriers

between them, which have been reared under reconstruction and race competition, and to restore the former relations must be of service. But, if this divergent trend of the two races continues, the only effective means of governing the criminal negro is through the co-operation of the better elements of his own race. Negro criminals have little regard for the condemnation of whites, whom they have learned to hate. Their feeling toward the better class of colored men cannot be of the same sort. The *Atlanta Constitution* recently appealed to the negroes as follows: "The honest, industrious, and self-respecting negroes . . . should take some measure calculated to deter the criminals of their color from their horrible work. . . . The negroes would have little trouble in reaching the ears of the criminals. . . . The negroes alone can put an end to a condition of affairs that is growing worse every day." I believe this to the full, but I also believe that the whites cannot win this co-operation from the negroes unless they are prepared to give a *quid pro quo*.

After the killing of Sam Hose, the governor of Georgia is reported to have said: "The negroes of the community lost the best opportunity they will ever have to elevate themselves in the estimation of their white neighbors. Had they helped to bring Hose to justice, it would have helped the cause in the eyes of the people. . . . The good and law abiding negroes must aid in bringing criminals to justice, whether they be white or black." If Governor Candler was correctly reported and weighed his words, he clearly implied a belief that Hose was brought to justice when he was illegally put to death. Killing by a mob for any offence, however hateful, is regarded even by conservative and order-loving negroes as an injustice, and, where there is a tacit understanding in the community, as there was during the pursuit of Hose, that the criminal if caught will be lynched, nothing more than quiescence can be secured from the negroes. If my conclusion is correct, the Southern whites must choose in such cases between gratifying a strong and natural desire for immediate retaliation, and coolly selecting the course which is best adapted to prevent such crimes in the future. I believe that ex-Governor Atkinson, in dissuading the mob from burning Hose at the stake and urging them to let the law take its course, was choosing the wise way of preventing such crimes in the future, was the real defender of Southern homes and Southern women.

Now it seems clear that the guilt of Sam Hose was established by more convincing evidence than is secured in nine cases out of ten, perhaps in ninety-nine out of one hundred, in which a lynching occurs. If this evidence has failed to convince a large proportion of Southern negroes, including probably nearly all those of criminal tendencies, then in other cases, where the evidence is less conclusive, they must be less convinced. What the facts are is of less importance than what they are believed to be, for belief, not fact, is the motive by which men are swayed.

To make my conclusions upon this subject clearer, I may briefly state certain views with which I cannot agree:—

1. I cannot accept a large proportion of the accounts printed in Northern papers, describing the relations of the two races in the South. One of the virtues of civilization imperfectly developed in the negro race is veracity, and accounts coming from them must be tested carefully before acceptance. Where nothing is known regarding the trustworthiness of the witnesses or the inherent probability of the statements, the presumption is in favor of the white man's testimony. Hence those newspapers which apparently make the contrary presumption are often misled. One instance which came under my own observation may serve for a hundred. Recently a lynching occurred in Alexandria, Va., within five miles of the national capital. A Washington correspondent of the Boston *Transcript* described the facts, and said that the negro boy was guilty of nothing more than insulting a child. The Springfield *Republican* reprinted the letter, and in editorial comment said that the boy's only crime was his color. I went at once to the mayor of Alexandria, and learned from him that at a hearing over which he presided the eight-year-old girl testified that the negro had been guilty of indecent familiarities upon her by force. Probably any Southern jury, on hearing the child's testimony, would have found the negro guilty of an attempt to commit rape. Yet representative Northern newspapers in reliance upon their sources of information have seriously misrepresented the facts.

2. On the other hand, I cannot admit that all or most of the alienation between the races is due to the grave mistakes of the reconstruction period or to the present policy of Northern papers. Race antagonism appears in other parts of the country, and in other countries, where this cause does not exist. To ascribe race

friction at the South, as certain Southern writers and speakers do, solely or mainly to the past or present policy of the government towards the Southern States or to the tone of Northern papers, and then to say almost in the same breath that race friction and lynching are found in the North, is clearly inconsistent. The friction between the races was probably an inevitable result of emancipation, although hastened and intensified by the blunders of reconstruction.

3. It seems improbable that the policy of enlisting negroes as federal soldiers has had a decided effect in increasing negro crime: Certainly, the evidence offered in favor of this claim is by no means sufficient to establish the conclusion.

4. A restricted suffrage in the Southern States will probably not avail materially to improve the conditions. Negro crime is apparently about as frequent and heinous in the District of Columbia, where for a generation the race has had no political privileges, as it is in the States of the far South.

5. Education, in the ordinary sense of that term, will not materially improve the situation. An education which will aid the negro in securing self-support is of primary importance.

6. No federal legislation, such as that demanded by certain negroes against lynching or that demanded by certain of both races making large appropriations for deportation of the negroes, seems likely to be enacted or offers a real and adequate solution of the problem.

Positively, I may sum up my conclusions as follows:—

A large and increasing amount of negro crime is manifested all over the country.

This raises a problem pressing with especial weight upon the States where negroes are numerous.

The causes may be grouped as defective family life, defective industrial equipment and ability in comparison with their competitors, increasing race solidarity among the negroes, and increasing alienation from the whites.

Southern whites often exaggerate the agency of Northern whites or Northern negroes in causing the present condition, and thus minimize their own responsibility.

Northern whites often ignore the burden which Southern whites and the better class of negroes are carrying and the degree to which the federal policy since the war has contributed to increase

race friction and negro crime. Hence they are often ignorant and unjust in their criticisms.

These misunderstandings are the strongest basis for the continuance and possible increase of sectional antagonism between North and South.

Lynching is harmful mainly because it prevents the rise of a public opinion based on a careful sifting of the facts. Where practised under any provocation, however great, by members of one race upon those of another, it fosters the development of separate public opinions one for each race, and hence tends to make co-operation of the two in one government impossible.

There has probably never been a more complete democracy than in the New England towns. Modern governments tend towards a more democratic form, and at the North the belief is very deep seated that the progress of humanity is dependent upon the maintenance and progress of democratic government. Now democratic government is essentially a government by organized legal public opinion. Any attempt to introduce government by disorganized public opinion secures at best the will of only a fraction of the public. Hence a believer in democracy is bound to be an opponent of lynch law, and the strength of the opposition in the North to lynch law is due, not as is sometimes said to hatred of the South, but rather to a love for democracy.

The greatest problem which modern democracy has to face is perhaps this: Can the democratic forms developed among a homogeneous people with unifying traditions, like the people of England, Old and New, be extended to people widely different in race, religion and ethical and social code? Can English forms of government ultimately apply to India and Egypt and South Africa? Can American forms be extended to the two races at the South or in the Philippines? Either the public opinion of one race must dominate, as that of the whites has done in India and the South, or the two races must co-operate so far as to develop a common public opinion. The latter is the only true democracy.