

A MUCH-TROUBLED LAND.

Light and Shadows of Southern Life--A Journey Full of Food for Thought.

Testimony of Various Classes of Southern People.

How the Negroes are Regarded by Settlers From the North

Chain-Gangs and Bloodhounds.

Special Correspondence of the New York Tribune.

WASHINGTON, July 20.—My journey through the Southern States has been full of interest, to myself, at least. I have seen some things that were sad, some that were amusing, and other things that excited my indignation, with much that is gratifying and encouraging. But I must close this series of letters, referring only to a few things for which I have not found space hitherto.

I have been in the country at a distance from the railroads, and have seen a great deal of the life of the people, especially of the middle and poorer classes, and have lived among them in ways that usually appeared to prevent or overcome any feeling of restraint or distrust on their part. I have also been in many families of the "best people" of both political parties, in the various states, and have everywhere received letters of introduction to leading citizens. These were freely proffered by men to whom I expressed the wish "to see the south as it is," and they were often of much service, but some of them I did not use, because I found that I could obtain all needed information by other means at less cost of time. Very few persons in the south learned that I was a newspaper correspondent. I had plenty of other ways of accounting for my journey, but it was not often necessary to account for it at all. It may be that some persons would have been less frank if they had known what use would be made of the information they so freely and courteously aided me to obtain, though many prominent southern men expressed the wish that I would tell the people of the north exactly how I found things everywhere. I have incurred no obligation of secrecy, except that, of course, I do not use names, or in any way designate individuals. The southern people, of all classes, are generally so social, so fond of talking, that I had rarely any need of special effort, or means of introduction, to enable me to obtain access to any one whom I wished to see.

I had been in the south during the war as a union soldier, that at that time I was an enthusiastic young abolitionist, etc. I did this in order to learn whether such an announcement would produce any change of feeling or attitude, or in any way able to observe any diminution of interest of frankness on the part of my southern acquaintances. At other times, when entering the circle around the stove in a hotel, I began by saying that I had explored portions of the south with the soldiers of such or such a union general, out this only led to much telling of war stories by all of us. I conclude, therefore, that a northern man in visiting a southern town, should go first to see the negro local politicians, many of whom are respectable fellows, and should spend a day or two in leading a company of them from one saloon to another, would not afterward be received very cordially by the respectable white people of the place. I have usually called on decent people first, prominent white citizens, or the educated colored clergymen or teachers, and have then found no obstacles in the way of observations of even the lower strata of the life of the town and the region about it.

I have conversed with the governors of five of the southern states, with most of the state superintendents of public instruction, and many other state officers. I have visited four state prisons, and have inspected several gangs of convicts working in the country on railroads, etc. I have visited several county jails and almshouses, three asylums for the insane, and many colleges and schools of all grades. My plan has been to take nobody's word for anything that I could see for myself, and to report impartially and accurately what I saw and heard, with the impressions made upon my own mind by everything.

THEIR OWN TESTIMONY.

Whatever has been said in these letters of an unfavorable or severe nature concerning any class of persons is drawn from what such persons have themselves said to me. I have not reported what people say to me of each other, but it will not do to accept what is said by any class in the south as an adequate account of "The Southern Situation." Some allowance for natural misunderstandings or for partial views is often, perhaps always, necessary. What I have related of democratic interference with negro voting was derived wholly from democrats themselves, who in some instances avowed that they were active in such interference, and in others told me that the local leaders of their own party managed matters as I have described. Such unfavorable account as is given in these letters regarding many republican office-holders and politicians is derived from what these men have themselves said to me, in friendly, careless conversation. They usually appeared to be glad "to see somebody from the north" as they said, and they often unbosomed themselves in a manner and degree that at first somewhat astonished me.

FOR SOME REASON WHICH I CANNOT ALWAYS DETERMINE, DEMOCRATS IN THE SOUTH USUALLY APPEAR EXTREMELY RESERVED WHEN I ASK THEM ABOUT THE CHARACTER AND METHODS OF ACTION OF SOUTHERN REPUBLICAN OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS OF THE PRESENT TIME.

They freely express their horror and disgust regarding the state of things which prevailed, as they say, some years ago, during "the carpet-bag period," but in regard to existing conditions, even in cases of most obvious unfitness and impropriety of official character and conduct, they assure me, with much emphasis, that "these

masters have greatly improved within a few years." None of the southern men with whom I have talked appear to feel that there is anything intolerable in the state of things which I have criticized pertaining to the character and methods of republican politicians. They express much satisfaction on account of the improvement that has already taken place, and are in the habit of saying that "everything will come right with time; but I have seen things that no northern community would long endure. As to the negroes, it has not been necessary to take anybody's account or opinion of them. I have seen a great deal of life, and have studied their thought and character with deep and friendly interest.

PARTIAL AND IMPARTIAL VIEWS.

A most sad and discouraging feature of the relation between the two races in the south is the character and morals of the young women of the colored race. Almost everybody speaks hopelessly of this subject, and it is tragic to see the feeling of the best colored men in regard to it. I cannot doubt, after the widest observation, that it would be better for the southern white people if there were no negroes in the country. But the negroes are here, and are as truly a part of the people and of the country as the whites themselves; and they have, of course, the same rights as citizens. But it was both a crime and a blunder to bring them here at first, and the evil consequences of that wrong will long follow the south and the whole country. I can now fully understand how almost any imaginative account may honestly be given of "the state of things in the south." Most travelers here meet only one or two classes of persons, and are apt to regard one or two classes of facts as correctly representing the state of the country. But no one brief statement or picture can adequately describe the south. Many different and often contradictory facts must be noted, and the chief or final impression is often a matter of a relative emphasis, and of the competence of the observer to judge of the comparative significance of many separate and conflicting tendencies.

One is in danger everywhere in the south of receiving entirely too much information from "the most intelligent citizens." If a traveler puts himself into their hands he will receive profuse hospitality, but he will have little opportunity for independent observation. Only a man who will wear rough clothes, a part of the time at least, and who can set the common people to talking can see the south as it is. At the same time it is, of course, necessary to see the best people, too, at their homes and "in society;" and any well-behaved man can do this in the regions which I have visited, no matter what his political opinions may be. I can express any political sentiment or opinion freely at the tables of leading men in all southern states, provided only that I recognize the requirements which are universal in polite society and that I converse with the women. The men will listen and participate, but in their homes and in society the women "queen it" more palpably than is usual in the north; and the homage or deference constantly rendered to them is more pronounced in the New England. They are never "left out of the talk" when they are present.

THE NEGRO FROM TWO STANDPOINTS.

I have been strongly impressed by the general hardness and unsympathetic feeling of northern men living in the south in regard to the negroes. Native southerners of character and position do not often appear to me to feel unkindly toward the negroes, though, of course, they often regard them contemptuously and fail to treat them as they ought. But northern men who have gone south since the war almost universally (those whom I have seen) speak of the negro with great harshness—a kind of cold hatred, and what I shall call cruelty. I have seen and heard so much of this that would have appeared incredible before, that it gives me sometimes a kind of nightmare fear that residence in the south might transform the most philanthropic abolitionist into a tyrant of merciless severity. Interesting questions arise here, but I have not time to discuss them.

EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRANTS.

I have not been able to find any "feeling against the north," or against northern people in the regions that I have visited, and so far as that is concerned, I should have no fear or reluctance in going to any part of the south which I have seen, if for any reason I wished to emigrate to that portion of our country. But many people are going south with no adequate forthright, or knowledge of the country. There is a side of southern character and life with which such persons are very likely to become acquainted. There are many men "in business" nearly everywhere in the south who are of the same type as the author of the following fraternal utterance. I heard of him as one of the fiercest fighters against us through the whole war, and went to see him. When I announced myself as a "Yankee invader" he shook hands heartily and replied: "I'm a reconstructed rebel. We fought till the fight was all whipped out of us. I rather like the men that whipped us. Tell all your people to come down here. They're just as welcome as our best friends, and we'll cheat the eye teeth out of 'em."

HUNTING NEGROES WITH DOGS.

In Mississippi I found a republican official who hires prisoners from the authorities and employs them in various kinds of labor. The convicts work under guard, and occasionally some of them try to escape. Most of them are negroes. When they run away the employer and his guards chase them with dogs. He uses a pack of hounds to follow the man by the scent. These would not attack the fugitive, but they are accompanied

by a powerful "catch-dog," that will tear a man in pieces in a few minutes if the flying, hunted wretch is unable to ascend a tree before the terrible brute is upon him. Just before I was in that neighborhood a runaway negro convict had played a shrewd trick which enabled him to make good his escape, for that time at least. Hearing the hounds on his trail, he struck across the country for the railroad. When he reached the railroad the dogs were in plain sight across the fields, and were rapidly gaining on him. Half a mile away he saw an express train approaching. He knew the dogs would follow his scent closely, so he ran to meet the train, which, but a moment after he had stepped from the track, ran over the dogs, killing them all. I must do the people of that region the justice to say that, although many of them do nothing to help the negroes, many of them are very kind to them, and their sympathies were all with the fugitive on this occasion. They were glad that he had outwitted his pursuers, and talked much about "the nigger that was too many for Captain So-and-So." This "Captain" is a northern man, and I thought he felt some degree of shame when I expressed my disgust at what I had heard, but he insisted that my sentimental view of the matter was absurd. "How else am I to catch the niggers, then?" he said. And some time afterward in talking with a prominent democrat of Cuero, Texas, of this occurrence in Mississippi, when I remarked that I felt the more indignant because the man was a northern man and a republican, my Texas acquaintance politely reminded me of a beautiful Sabbath morning view of the north, which he said he had seen from his window, and that he felt sure that he would never again see such a view.

POLITICAL FABLES.

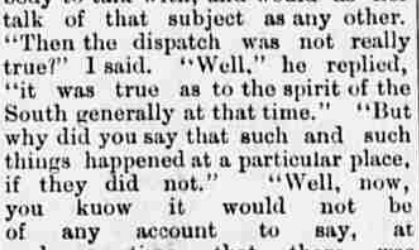
In Mississippi, also, I was told by a number of northern people of an account sent to the northern press during "the Hayes campaign," which located an atrocious political outrage at the place which I was then visiting. These persons seemed reputable, and they all affirmed that nothing of the kind had ever occurred there. I inquired regarding the author of the dispatch, and learned that he was still living a few miles away, I went to see him. He laughed when I told him my errand, took a tish chew of tobacco, and crossing his feet on the top of the table before him, began talking of the affair in an easy, fluent, indifferent style, which seemed to indicate that he was glad to have somebody to talk with, and would as lief talk of that subject as any other. "Then the dispatch was really true," I said. "Well," he replied, "it was true as to the spirit of the South generally at that time." "But why did you say that such and such things happened at a particular place, if they did not?" "Well, now, you know it would not be of any account to say, at such a time, that there was such a devilish feeling in the south. But it rather makes people up to tell them that something's been done at a place that they've heard of." "But it was not true." "But he thought the use of a fable or parable was justifiable under the circumstances, because it was the only way to give point or effectiveness to any account of the condition of the south at that time. "All writers do pretty much the same thing," he urged; "they have to." "Oh, I hope not," I said. "Well, now, if you lived down here while you'd find out we have to fight the devil with fire." The northern people who told me of this occurrence were good republicans, and they were specially indignant about the fabrication, because it alarmed some of their northern friends who had been preparing to remove to that region, but were now frightened from their purpose.

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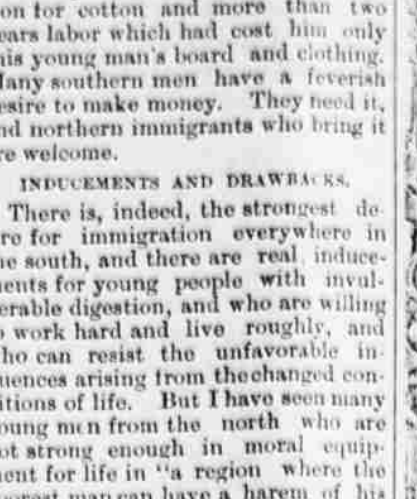
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