

## THE COLORED RACE IN THE UNITED STATES.

THERE are several things which unite to give a peculiar interest to the statistics of the colored race in the United States. In the first place, we are here dealing with an element of the population whose presence in the land is due entirely to force. All the other elements of our population represent migrations, early or late, which were voluntary, but the blacks were originally brought into this country through high-handed, brutal, often barbarously cruel violence. It would be no strained supposition that but for the slave trade as, with all its horrors, it was carried on between 1620 and 1808, there would not be 75,000 Africans in the United States, whereas now we have 7,500,000.

In addition to the fact just noted, viz., that but for the slave trade the blacks would not have been here at all, we have, in the second place, the fact that the domestic institution of slavery caused this element of our population to be distributed within the country, prior to 1861, very differently from what it would have been had the blacks been left free to place themselves according to their own tastes and industrial aptitudes. Wherever the master went within the territory where slavery was protected by law he carried the slave, without reference to the latter's predilections; and the natural range of residence for the master was much greater than the natural range of residence for the slave. The former represented a race bred in northern latitudes, and was hence thoroughly at home on the mountain side or table land; while yet, by the privilege of his strain, he could, without danger or great inconvenience, move southward if his interests required. The latter, on the other hand, represented a race bred under tropical conditions, and could move up the mountain side or go northward only at a large sacrifice of vitality and force.

But it was not merely the will or the interests of the master class which caused a far wider distribution of the colored element than would have taken place in a state of freedom. In his effort

to escape from bondage, the black man made his way into regions whose climate and prevailing industries were, in almost the last degree, alien or hostile to him. Hence it came about that the close of the war found large bodies of this element of the population in positions which were highly abnormal.

In the third place, the abrupt conclusion of the slave trade in 1808 and the absence of any considerable immigration of colored people since that date, give a unique clearness and confidence to the statistical study of this element of our population. Substantially all of the 7,500,000 colored persons in the United States to-day are descended from the 700,000 women of this race found in the United States in 1810.

In the fourth place, while white blood has been, in some degree, mixed with colored, it has resulted, partly from the force of the old slave laws, by which the child followed the condition of the mother, and partly from the instinctive sentiments of the people, that all the descendants of those 700,000 colored women are still recognized and grouped together in the census. A man or a woman who is one quarter French or German, or even one half English, Irish, or Scotch, may not be known as such except by family friends; but a man or a woman who has a quarter, perhaps even only an eighth, of negro blood is still recognized as belonging to that race, and is so classed, not only in popular speech, but in the enumerations of the census.

The first census, in 1790, found the colored population of the country 757,208, constituting 19.3 per cent. of the total population. The census of 1810, two years after the abolition of the slave trade, found this element numbering 1,377,808, or 19 per cent. of the total population. Ever since the latter date the increase of the colored element has been less than that of the total population; and at each successive census the colored element has been found to constitute a smaller and still smaller share of the total population. In this last statement I assume a reasonable correction of the admitted defects of the census of 1870 in respect to the colored people of the South.

We do not yet know exactly what was the colored population of 1890 as found by the eleventh census. But the central office at Washington has, with truly remarkable promptitude,

given us the figures for all the late slave States and for the single free State of Kansas; communities which embraced fifteen sixteenths of this element of the population in 1880. So far, the rate of gain in the ten years intervening has been found to be 13.9 per cent., as against 24.86 per cent. for the entire population of the country. If we apply to the remainder of the colored population of 1880 the same ratio of increase which has been found to exist in that part which has been counted, we shall have the total for 1890 a little under seven and a half millions.

I have spoken of corrections to be made in the figures given for the colored population for 1870. The present census office has estimated the loss out of this element, at that time, to have been three quarters of a million. My own estimate has always placed that loss between three and four hundred thousand. Professor Newton, the eminent mathematician of Yale University, has recently computed it as about 550,000. Calling the loss 510,000, we should then have, in the following table, the statistical history of the colored race within the United States during the first hundred years of the nation's history:

TABLE I.—COLORED POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES.

Years.	Colored Population.	Per Cent. of Total Population.	Increase Per Cent.		
			In 10 Years.	In 20 Years.	In 30 Years.
1790,....	757,208	19.3	....	....	....
1800,....	1,002,037	18.9	32.33	....	....
1810,....	1,377,808	19.	37.5	81.96	....
1820,....	1,771,656	18.4	28.59	76.80	133.97
1830,....	2,328,642	18.1	31.44	69.01	132.39
1840,....	2,873,648	16.8	23.4	62.2	108.57
1850,....	3,638,808	15.7	26.63	56.26	105.39
1860,....	4,441,830	14.1	22.07	54.57	90.74
1870,....	5,391,000*	13.8	21.37	48.15	87.59
1880,....	6,580,793	13.1	22.07	48.15	80.25
1890,....	7,500,000*	11.9	13.9	39.12	68.85

Thus while the total population of the country has, during the century, increased sixteenfold, the colored element has increased but tenfold. In 1790 that element constituted nearly one fifth of the population; in 1840, but one sixth; in 1860, but one seventh; in 1890, less than one eighth. The increase per cent.

\* Partly estimated.

within that element itself has tended to a decline since 1810, alike by ten-year periods and by twenty-year periods; while the decline has been continuous by thirty-year periods from the beginning.

These references to the past of the colored race in the United States have been made mainly with a view to clearing the ground for reasonable conjectures regarding its future. What can be said of this? In the first place, a glance at the foregoing table is sufficient to establish a strong probability that the movement there seen to have been so steadily in progress, during eighty years, toward reducing the relative importance of this element in the population of the country, will go on, at least through a considerable future, before it can be arrested; the strongest improbability that this movement will ever, in our future course as a nation, be reversed.

But is there anything to be said on this point beyond what appears on the first glance at our table? Here comes in the significance of one of the considerations adverted to in the opening of this article, viz., that the distribution of the colored people over our land, prior to the outbreak of the civil war, had been very different from what it would have been had only their own natural aptitudes and instincts been consulted in that matter. If this be true, we should expect to find that, during the twenty-five or twenty-seven years since the blacks were left free to move within the country upon their own impulses, social, economical, and climatic forces have been operating to redress the disturbed balance. On this point the evidence of the tenth census could not be very conclusive, especially in view of the disputed count of 1870; but the testimony of the eleventh census, so far as it has yet been given, very clearly shows that a movement is in progress toward the abandonment by the blacks of the higher, colder, and drier lands to which they were carried by the will of the master class.

Unfortunately we have, as yet, only Kansas among the former free States, in the race tables thus far issued by the census office; and the experience of a single State in this respect cannot be held

to go very far, especially as the numbers concerned are small. We shall, therefore, omit consideration of it.

In the following table we draw into two groups all the other States of which the race statistics are now attainable. The first embraces the middle-southern belt of the old slave States; States in which slavery was quite as much of a political and social as of an economic institution; States in which slaves were held, perhaps, even more from considerations of social dignity and importance or of personal convenience than from considerations of pecuniary gain. These States are Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Missouri. With them goes the District of Columbia. In most of these communities the colored element has traditionally been one quarter or less of the whole population, the exceptions being North Carolina, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, where, ten years ago, this element constituted a third or more of the total population. Only two, viz., North Carolina and Tennessee, are considerable cotton States; and in each of these the cultivation of that crop is confined to comparatively small sections. The constitution of the second group speaks for itself.

TABLE II.—COLORED POPULATION OF CERTAIN STATES.

State.	1880.	1890.	Per Cent. of Increase.
Delaware, .....	26,442	29,022	9.76
District of Columbia,.....	59,596	75,927	27.40
Kentucky, .....	271,451	272,981	0.56
Maryland,.....	210,230	218,004	3.70
Missouri, .....	145,350	154,131	6.04
North Carolina,.....	531,277	567,170	6.76
Tennessee,.....	403,151	434,300	7.73
Virginia, .....	631,616	640,867	1.46
West Virginia,.....	25,886	33,508	29.44
Alabama, .....	600,103	681,431	13.55
Arkansas,.....	210,666	311,227	47.73
Florida, .....	126,090	166,678	31.56
Georgia,.....	725,133	863,716	19.11
Louisiana, .....	483,655	562,893	16.38
Mississippi, .....	650,291	747,720	14.98
South Carolina,.....	604,332	692,503	14.59
Texas,.....	393,384	492,837	25.28

In the first group, West Virginia and the District of Columbia show a comparatively high rate of increase; but this concerns

very small populations only. The remaining great masses of the colored people of 1880 in this group show gains far below the average of that element for the whole country. On the other hand, it is noticeable how closely, with the exception of Arkansas, Florida, and Texas (all which had in 1880, and indeed still have, large unoccupied areas), the cotton-planting States keep to that average. The great masses of colored population in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina have increased during the decade at between 13.55 and 19.11 per cent.

Taking the two groups as wholes, we find that the increase of the colored population during 1880-90 has been in the first but five and a half per cent., while in the second it approximated 19 per cent. Meanwhile the increase of white population in all these States greatly outran that of the colored.

Not only has there thus been, as between the first and the second group of States under consideration, a decided tendency to a concentration of the colored element in the cotton-raising States on or near the Gulf, but in certain of the States of either group which have a wide range in altitude there has also been manifested a tendency, though naturally much less marked in force, toward the concentration of that element upon the lower lands. Thus in Georgia, which comprises a vast extent alike of typical "black-belt" cotton lands and of mountain lands suited to manufactures and mining, 48.43 per cent. of the colored population of 1880 lived less than five hundred feet above the sea. In 1890 the ratio had increased to 51.87. In Tennessee, which likewise has a wide range in altitude, the corresponding proportions have increased from 50.52 in 1880 to 52.40 in 1890.

What do such facts as have been adduced from the record of the past ten years indicate regarding the future of the colored race in the United States? I answer, they show that the anticipations which so many Americans have formed, with more or with less of satisfaction, regarding a large continuous increase of that element, up to some ultimate very high point, have little foundation in recent experience. The presiding officer of a Republican State convention two years ago sketched for his auditors a growth of the colored race in the United States, which was to bring them, at no distant future, to a total of fifty millions!

Of course, the extravagance of this computation was due in great part to the omissions (already referred to in this paper) from the colored census of 1870, which caused a very large apparent gain between that year and 1880. But the unreality of the estimate in question was also in part due to a failure to note the consideration which is intimated in the figures just presented, viz., that the natural field for the colored race is, not strictly, indeed, yet still virtually, circumscribed by climate and industrial conditions. Now, there is much reason to believe that a race that is limited in its range becomes, by that very fact, subject also to important restrictions upon its capabilities of sustained increase within that range. If the growth of the colored race is hereafter to take place mainly within the cotton belt, it is safe to say that it will never reach fifty millions, or a third of that number. I would not presume to say that the evidence which has been offered as to the tendency of the colored people toward concentration within the region referred to is conclusive; but I entertain a strong conviction that the further course of our population will exhibit that tendency in continually growing force; that this element will be more and more drained off from the higher and colder lands into the low, hot regions bordering the Gulf of Mexico.

That in these regions the negro finds his most favorable habitat and environment does not require physiological proof. He is here, in the highest sense, at home. The malarial diseases, so destructive to Europeans in this climate and on this soil, have little power over him. At the same time, the industrial *raison d'être* of the negro is here found at its maximum. In the northern States that *raison d'être* wholly disappears. There is nothing here, aside from a few kinds of personal service, which the negro can do, which the white man cannot do as well or perhaps better. Even upon the high lands of the old slave States, in the upper parts of Alabama or Georgia, for instance, or in the mountain districts of Tennessee and North Carolina, there is little which the negro can do which the white man cannot do equally well. Nay, in the upland cultivation of the cotton crop, I entertain the conviction that the vigorous, resolute white element, free from the incubus of human slavery, will more and more assert itself, large plantations being subdivided into small cotton farms.

If the foregoing views are approximately correct, the relative decline of the colored population throughout the United States, except in the cotton belt, will be due partly to the more rapid growth of the white element; partly to migration southward from Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, and North Carolina, under urgent calls for additional labor in the cotton fields, such as have been so clamorously made during the past few months; partly to the high rate of mortality prevailing among negroes in northern latitudes and even in southern cities.

To illustrate the last point I will take twenty-three counties in the South, containing cities and large towns and having an aggregate population, according to the tenth census, of nearly 600,000 whites and almost exactly as many negroes. In these counties, while the birth rates per 1,000 of living population were for the whites 28.71 and for the colored 35.08, the proportion of those born and dying in the census year, per 1,000 births, was for the whites 100.1 and for the colored 140.08. If, however, we look to the very large cities alone for the statistics of mortality, we find the disproportion between the death rate among the whites and the death rate among the colored much exaggerated, to the disadvantage of the latter. Thus in New Orleans, in the census year 1889-90, the deaths per 1,000 of the living population were for the whites 25.57 and for the blacks 36. In Baltimore the corresponding death rate was for the whites 22.63, for the colored 36.39. In St. Louis the death rate was for the whites 18.19, for the colored 33.78. In Washington (including in this term the whole of the District of Columbia) the corresponding rates were for the whites 19.84, for the colored 38.1. We have not as yet the statistics of mortality for Louisville, Richmond, and Charleston, but in 1880 the proportion of deaths among the two elements of population in these cities was as follows:

Cities.	Deaths per 1,000 of Living Population.	
	White.	Colored.
Louisville,.....	20.04	34.76
Richmond,.....	19.12	31.97
Charleston,.....	23.78	45.



It will be seen from the foregoing data that the colored population of the United States is at the present time maintaining its relatively slight rate of increase only by means of a very high birth rate, just a little in excess of a very high death rate. This is a very critical situation, since anything which may occur to reduce the birth rate will have no tendency whatever to reduce the death rate. Indeed, in the case of an untrained and ill-developed race, any cause, whether the diminution of marriages or persistence in criminal practices, which diminishes the birth rate is more than likely to accelerate the death rate. Hence we may say that wherever the industrial *raison d'être* of the colored man, distinguished as an economic agent from the white, shall diminish in any part of the country, this is not unlikely to be followed by a decline in this element more rapid than would occur in the case of another element of the population which had been running along on a lower birth rate but with also a lower death rate.

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