

CHAPTER XI

THE RESULTS OF THE WAR IN THE SOUTH

For what can war but endless war still breed?

—MILTON.

We have considered some of the general effects of the Civil War upon the country—effects which would have been avoided if Garrison's peaceful counsels had prevailed; but many of these evils have been especially concentrated in the South. This is not the fault of the Southerner, for with the possible exception of his lesser fondness for manual labor, he differs in no essential respect from other men of Anglo-Saxon descent, and so far as the race question is concerned, the Northerner who settles in the South is usually the less considerate of the two. But the war absorbed the entire South. Every man and boy took part in it. It devastated the home, and where it did not devastate it impoverished. War *was* hell in Georgia, where General Sherman learned its character after having created it; and not a mere matter of the morning newspaper, as it was in many

Results of the War in the South

a Northern household. It was a matter of necessity that its damning effects should be greatest in the States of the Confederacy. If it is true that a large crop of military schools sprang up in the North, and that much was done to infect the minds of the young with the ideals of militarism, in the South every lad inherited by his birthright the title of major or captain. I have my own impressions of a recent journey in the South which revealed to me the unfortunate results of choosing war as an antidote for slavery, and perhaps I may be pardoned for devoting a chapter to my recollections, believing that they substantiate Garrison's position that gunpowder should have no place in the social pharmacopeia. And first, then, to show that the race question is farther from settlement than ever.

I put up one afternoon for a few hours at a tiny hotel in a remote village, and a room was assigned to me which had been vacated in haste for my benefit by some more permanent resident. It bore all the marks of a sitting-room as well as a bedroom, and on the table were lying, one on the other, a couple of books which had evidently been recently laid aside, and each of them contained a book-mark. The under volume was a large Bagster Bible; the upper was a big book bearing on its upturned cover the exag-

Garrison the Non-Resistant

gerated face of a negro in gilt, made to look as much like an ape as possible, with the title in gilt letters above and below it, "The Negro a Beast, Or In the Image of God." Two Negro servants were coming in and out of the room, making the fire and preparing for my comfort, and I could not but wonder at the strange lack of delicacy of the Bible reader who had left this hideous volume to stare them in the face, and this, too, in the chivalrous South! I picked up the book in curiosity after the servants had left. The title page was adorned by a series of subtitles, of which I copied one as a sample. It read as follows: "The Negro a Beast, But Created With Articulate Speech and Hands, That He May Be of Service to His Master, the White Man." Here was indeed a rich relic of the ancient South of slavery, a South that has passed away forever! I looked down at the date and rubbed my eyes in astonishment. There must be some mistake. The book was printed in the year of Our Lord 1900! And in one of the greatest cities of the South, too! And what do you suppose is the name of the publishing company which issues this precious work? It is called the "American Book and Bible House!" I turned over the pages of the book. It was an illiterate medley of folly and superstition—an attempt to prove by Scripture that the Negro

Results of the War in the South

was not the descendant of Ham, and to show that the serpent in the garden of Eden was a black man! It was just such a book as, if it had been produced by a Negro, would almost have justified despair for his race. It is not remarkable perhaps that a single lunatic should have written such a book, but that a publisher should have been found for it, that commercial success should have been expected from it, that people should buy it and lay it on their Bibles and leave it on their tables to insult the black men who saw it, and astound the white—all this was incredible.

It so happened that I was reading a book written by a Negro at the same time, and I took it from my portmanteau and laid it beside the other volume. My book was Booker Washington's "Up from Slavery," a book which I had some difficulty in getting in a great Southern city, and which proved conclusively that its author was one of the best and ablest men in this country, black or white; and it made me blush for my white race as I thought of these two authors together.

And shortly afterwards I read a third book, which occupies the middle ground between these two, but which unfortunately resembles the white man's folly more than the black man's wisdom. It is "The Leopard's Spots,"

by the Rev. Thomas Dixon, a shining light in the Southern Baptist Church; and it tempts me to retort, "Thou tiger, first wash the stripes out of thine own hide, and then shalt thou see clearly to wash out the spots out of thy brother's hide," for it is in the spirit of the tiger rather than in that of the Christian minister that Mr. Dixon treats the delicate issues of the race question which is the subject of his novel. The point which he seeks to make is that the Negro must be kept by force, if necessary, in the place of an inferior, and that he should not be educated above it. Again and again he reiterates the statement which I give in his own words, for it seems to me to be lacking in clearness to say the least, that "in a democracy you cannot build a nation inside of a nation of two antagonistic races, and therefore the future American must be either an Anglo-Saxon or a mulatto." This mixing up of the marriage relation with other social relations runs through the whole book, and it seems to me to be illogical. I have dined on a social equality with thousands of white women whom it would have been repugnant to me to marry. I fail to see that the one idea involves the other. I believe it is natural and best that people should intermarry within their own race. We received Li Hung Chang with complete social equality, and yet most of us would not

Results of the War in the South

be willing to marry his daughter, and probably he fully reciprocated the feeling. In the absence of all inherited artificial feeling and tradition, I should think that a Negro would prefer to marry one of his own color. The wrens and orioles are now singing out of my window. They do not intermarry, but I do not see why that should prevent them from treating each other with entire courtesy up to the point of social equality. The danger of a nation of mulattos, if it is a danger, does not lie in the direction of intermarriage, as we all know, but of the illicit intercourse which has already produced millions of them, and which shows how far the white man can overcome his distaste for the Negro. Flout the fact as we may, a large part of the colored population of the South are our own cousins.

The matter of the "usual crime" committed by Negroes is a frightful one and it will have to be faced, but it is very clear that it has not been faced in the right way. Lynchings, burnings at the stake—and Mr. Dixon depicts one for us—have failed to decrease the number of them. And let us remember that every civilized nation contains solitary brutes who assault and murder women, but that only white Americans still burn at the stake—and that, too, in multitudes. Savagery will not cure savagery, and the tiger cannot tame

the leopard. Mr. Dixon seems to see this when he speaks of the mob as a thousand-legged beast, and anticipates with dread the time when there will be a black beast of the same kind to set off against the white beast. He thinks that the permanent display of force by the whites is the best remedy, and forgets, Christian minister though he be, that the efficacy of sympathy and brotherly interest has scarcely been tried. The race question is no simple matter to be settled at a thousand miles' distance by academic theories; but it is safe to say that it will only be solved by the spirit of love, and that Booker Washington shows far more of this than the author of "The Leopard's Spots." Mr. Dixon may not know it, but he seems to believe in a gospel of hate. One of the heroes of the book, an ex-Confederate common soldier, admits that he hates the very sight of a Negro, and this before the period of reconstruction had set in and when the Negro had done nothing but work and suffer. There is a total lack of measure, too, in the punishments meted to the black man in this novel. One of them asks a white woman to kiss him. He makes no effort to force her to comply, but he is speedily hanged. "His thick lips had been split with a sharp knife, and from his teeth hung this placard: 'The answer of the Anglo-Saxon race to Negro

Results of the War in the South

lips that dare pollute with words the womanhood of the South.'” There is no hint in the story that this penalty was slightly excessive, nor that a gentleman need hesitate in taking part in such an execution. In another place a Negro trooper refuses to make room on a sidewalk for a lady and her male escort. He is at once beaten to death. Surely this is the spirit of the tiger.

Mr. Dixon's ideal Negro is the old plantation servant who despises his own race. He draws the picture of one of them and holds him up to admiration. When the whites overthrow the Negro government, old Nelse cries, “Dar now! Ain't I done told you no kinky-headed niggers gwine ter run dis gov'ment!” I humbly submit that such a man is really a disgrace to any race. It is on the lines of self-respect that the Negro must do his part in solving the race question. He must learn his own worth, not in the spirit of boastfulness nor of imitation, but in the spirit of self-improvement and honor. He must put down himself the crimes against women which are his shame, and I have faith that men like Booker Washington can set such a movement on foot. The white clergy of the South have a tremendous responsibility. They have an influence far transcending that of their colleagues in the North. Will they use it like Mr. Dixon and the ministers

Garrison the Non-Resistant

he creates in his book, to foment misunderstandings and distrust, or to infuse the spirit of Christ into the problem? It is surely discouraging to find the Episcopal bishop of Arkansas, an Ohioan, publicly defending the practice of lynching. We all admit now that the policy of "reconstruction" was a sad mistake and that Northern interference can do little, but it is still possible to begin a new work of reconstruction based upon human sympathy. If the South will undertake this task, it will escape the battle of the "beasts" which is otherwise inevitable. Swedenborg somewhere says that the African race is to be the race of love—the race of the future. Let it try to live up to this prophecy, and set a good example to the whites. The Rev. Henry Richards, for many years a missionary on the Congo, writes: "I believe the Anglo-Saxon to be naturally far more cruel and brutal than the African." There should be hope then for the latter race.

It is to be hoped that there is some truth in the theory of reincarnation, for it affords such grand opportunities for poetic justice. If there is anything in it, the author of "The Negro a Beast" should make his next appearance as a full-blooded Congo black; the author of "Leopard's Spots" would figure among the mulattos from whom he wishes to save us; and the author of "Up From Sla-

Results of the War in the South

very"—well—if any man has earned the right to the whitest of skins (if he would like to have one) it is Booker Washington. And if these three gentlemen came on the stage again together, I am confident that we should find the last of the three exerting his powers for the benefit of the other two in a spirit of love to which they are total strangers.

And I cannot refrain from adding an anecdote or two from my own experience to show the perpetual atmosphere of explosives in which the Southerner lives as a result of the war. We are bad enough in the North, what with the enormous number of our homicides, the not unusual habit of carrying revolvers, and the craze for militarism, battleships and warfare; but all these faults are aggravated in the South, and it seems a natural result of the great war.

I formed one of a group one evening sitting around the stove in the hotel office of a Southern town. There were three or four commercial men, and one old graybeard who seemed to be related in some way to the proprietor and who was the living image of Walt Whitman. From time to time he poked the fire with an old sword, which continual use of the kind had reduced to half its original length.

"You used that all through the wa', didn't you, Uncle Joe?" said one of the party, spit-

Garrison the Non-Resistant

ting into the sandbox which held the stove. The old man nodded assent, but like a modest man he showed no desire to enlarge on the subject. He gave the sword a shove into the sand and drew back into his wooden chair. I looked with approval on the converted weapon. It was even better than a spear-made pruning hook, for there had been no unnecessary labor of remanufacture and no disguise of the happy change of function. A young Tennessean was expatiating upon the merits of his house paint. He had formerly been in the tobacco business and had sold snuff in regions where the whole population, men, women and children, chew the vile stuff until they reek with it. Now he was helping to beautify and preserve the weather-stained houses of the countryside, and I felt that he had been reclaimed as well as the sword. We were, barring the spitting, a pleasant, cheerful and sociable company.

Suddenly a draft of air came in upon us and we could hear a commotion at the outer door, dominated by the agreeable deep-chested voice of a man, who was saluting the landlord. Soon they came in to the desk, two Negroes carrying luggage behind them. In a moment the stove was deserted and all of my companions gathered around the new arrival. He was a large man of middle age with a gray mustache and ruddy face, at

Results of the War in the South

once strong in its lines and good natured. My friends approached him respectfully and without any sign of their customary familiarity, and as he shook hands with them there was a pleasant word for each. And then in his hearty voice he explained that his train was ten hours late and that he must get on to such and such a town that evening, and there was a general giving of advice and telephoning and consulting of timetables until it was proven beyond peradventure that it was impossible for him to proceed until the morrow.

Meanwhile I felt rather "out of it," and at an early stage of the proceedings good old Uncle Joe took pity upon me, and coming over to me whispered:

"You know who that is, don't you?"

I acknowledged with shame that I did not, and with a look of blank amazement, he added:

"Why, that's Major Bedford!" as if the announcement would surely startle me. I fear that my expression was unsatisfactory to him, for there was sorrow in his tone as he explained to the benighted Yankee that Major Bedford was the biggest lawyer in West Carobama, and that only last month he got Hank Martin off, though everybody knew he had chucked Sam Davis into the well.

Garrison the Non-Resistant

By this time the Major had gone in to supper and my friends resumed their seats around the stove, while a chorus of admiration for the great lawyer filled the smoky air. When it at last subsided, one rather sullen individual who was opposite me said drily:

"He's a mean man, though," and then to my surprise, one by one the others nodded their heads and echoed:

"Yes, he *is* a mean man."

I could not account for this apparent change of opinion, and I ventured to ask for light.

"I don't quite understand," I said. "You were all praising him a minute ago, and he certainly seems to be very good natured and genial. How can he be a mean man?"

"You see, he shoots pretty quick. D'you remember how he shot Jim Foster in court? Why, that young fellow was the most promising lawyer in the State, and he had a case against the Major, and I don't know how it was, but he got excited and said somebody lied, and probably they had, and out the Major whips his six-shooter and shot the boy dead as a doornail."

"Is it possible," I cried, "and how did he escape hanging?"

"Self-defense," was the laconic reply. This was my first lesson in the Southern significance of the word "mean," but a few days later

Results of the War in the South

my education in this respect was completed, and I shall never again misunderstand the word in that latitude.

It happened this way. I had taken a room for the night in a poor hotel (which is a rather uncommon thing in the South). My bedroom was not a comfortable place and the tobacco stains on the walls were revolting. The bed was a bad one, too, and it took me a long time to fall asleep, but at last I succeeded. I must have been sleeping for two or three hours when I heard a loud call in the hallway, "Waitah! waitah!" Then followed in an undertone a string of drunken, incoherent imprecations. "Dam' shame! Never come here again. Treat a gen'leman so," with a series of unrepeatable oaths getting louder and louder until he bellowed out again, "Waitah, waitah! where's my room, waitah!" I could hear the man shuffling along the corridor, falling from time to time, and trying the doors as he passed, while the various inmates of the rooms, with greater or less eloquence, called down curses upon his head. I expected from moment to moment to hear the report of a revolver, and I wondered how much of an obstruction my door would offer to a bullet, and was quite prepared to slide down behind the bed in case he should try to get into my room. I watched the disturbance auricularly as I have often

watched a thunderstorm. At one moment it would be raging outside of my door; then it would gradually move along, the explosions and crashes becoming less distinct until the storm center passed quite out of my horizon, the unhappy guest having reached a distant part of the hotel. Then just as I was dozing off, I would hear the faint echoes of his cry, "Waitah, waitah!" and it would grow stronger and stronger until he would fall in a heap again close to my quarters, spluttering, muttering and cursing worse than before. Three or four times the storm cloud disappeared in the distance, and three or four times back it came, until I was in despair. But once again it was slowly blown away, WAITAH! *Waitah!* Waitah!" and I heard it no more.

It was nearly nine o'clock when I came in to breakfast in the morning and took my seat at a table occupied by two "drummers," who were conversing with each other.

"Tol'able lively night," remarked one of them, whom I shall call Smith.

"Yes," said I. "Who on earth was that man, and what ever became of him?"

"It's Pete Bunker," replied the man. "Don't you know Pete? Why, the Bunkers are one of the best families in these parts. The cook found him in the kitchen this morning sitting at the table fast asleep with his head on his arms. He came out of his room for some-

Results of the War in the South

thing or other, and couldn't find it again. But Pete don't often get drunk like that. He's a good fellow when he's sober."

"He's a mean man, though, sometimes," said the other. "Do you remember how he shot that nigger Simpson? That was six years ago, and the boy can't walk to-day. He done for him, he did. And Simpson hadn't done nothin', either."

"Did they try him for it?" I asked.

"Naw," was the reply, and the two men looked at me in wonder.

"I reckon he left his gun in his room last night," said Smith. "It was pretty lucky. But there hain't been any shootin' in town lately. When was the last shootin', Dave?"

"A year ago Christmas," answered Dave. "That Jake Hart scrimmage. You remember. Jake got angry at Cy Jones and shot him dead. Jake was an awful nice fellow, but I must say he was a mean one. And then Tom Spear—he was sheriff—he said he'd arrest him if it took him ten years, and Jake, he said he shouldn't. I met Jake in the street one day, and he says to me, says he, 'Just you tell Tom Spear that I like him first rate,' says he; 'he's done me a lot of good turns and I'd like to do him a good turn, too; but just you tell him that if he tries to grab me I'll shoot him at sight like a dog, I will,' says he. 'Just tell him that.'

And I told Tom sure enough, and he got three fellers to go with him. He wanted me to go with him, but I wouldn't—not much. I knowed that Jake Hart was a mean man. But he went with three of 'em, and they heard Jake was at Tim Brown's, and they went upstairs and opened the door; and Jake, just as quiet as I am, he shoots Tom Spear dead; and then the next feller shoots Jake right through the chest, and he falls down, but he sits up again and draws a bead on number two, and down he goes, and then he shoots number three, and the fourth man he thought he'd better stay downstairs. That was Christmas Eve, and they buried all four of 'em together. Ther hain't been any shootin' in town since then."

"Yes, Jake was a mean cuss," said Smith, "but I liked him first rate." And we finished our buckwheat cakes in silence.

If Garrison were alive and could visit the South to-day and read "Up From Slavery," "The Leopard's Spots" and "The Negro a Beast," he would find sufficient reasons for congratulating himself upon his course. Slavery was a crying evil. In a thousand ways it was a disgrace to his country and to mankind, and it should have been abolished; but it was abolished the wrong way. The Negro is far better off as a wage earner than he was as a slave, but the hostility between

Results of the War in the South

the races has been intensified by the rude and ruthless manner of bringing the change about. And besides this, the habits of four years of licensed slaughter, arson, rape and rapine have corrupted both races; and not the least of the evil legacies of the war is the revolver, an instrument manufactured only for manslaughter—a miserable, crooked little vermin which is gnawing its way into the vitals of the community and destroying civilization in its path. It ought to be denounced in every pulpit and boycotted in every decent assembly of men. It is a nuisance which must be abated before the South can entertain any just expectation of rivaling the North. She is hopelessly handicapped by her “mean men.”

Garrison believed as fully in the abolition of war as in the abolition of slavery. He did not believe in doing evil that good may come. But he was overruled, and with the good came a vast cloud of evils which still cast their shadow thick upon the land.