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The Negro a Beast

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## “THE NEGRO A BEAST.”

BY EDWARD ATKINSON.

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IN one of the later numbers of “De Bow’s Review,” published before the Civil War, an article appeared purporting to be from a scientific writer of considerable repute as an ethnologist, who held that in the story of Adam and Eve the serpent had been much maligned. He held that the Hebrew word which had been translated “serpent” in telling the story of the temptation also meant “black,” and that it was the Negro gardener who induced Eve to eat the apple, and had therefore been doomed to slavery.

That pseudo-scientific theory has lately been repeated in a book which is the most sacrilegious book ever issued from the press in this country, entitled “The Negro a Beast.” It emanates from a building known as the Bible House of St. Louis, and is said to be securing a very wide circulation among the poor whites of the Cotton States, among whom its apparent purpose is to create animosity and to promote violence in dealing with the colored race. This writer repeats the theory of “De Bow’s Review” with a variation, pretending that the Negro is not a descendant of Adam and Eve, therefore not a man; but that he is descended from beasts, and that therefore no Negro has any of the rights of human beings and may be treated as a beast. This is the last ditch in which this folly will be submerged.

This pernicious book is, apparently, a part of the political machine which is being made use of by a political faction to deprive the colored people of the old Cotton States of all their political and civil rights. It is sure to fail.

There is another class of books, the tendency of which is to mislead the present generation of Northern readers who are not familiar with the conditions of the South before the Civil War. These are the excellent novels of Southern writers of high repute,

giving most attractive and sincere pictures of the patriarchal aspect of slavery, especially in Virginia. They prove the high character of many of the Virginia planters; they bear witness to the masters' care for the welfare of their slaves; how the slaves were taught to read in spite of legislative penalties, and how the marriage rite was respected among the colored people so long as they were under the control of these high-minded planters.

What does not appear in these books is the fate that very often befell the same bodies of Negroes when the old planters' estates were either divided among many heirs, or divided under such conditions that the personal chattels had to be sold. When that time came there could no longer be any respect either for the marriage of the Negroes or for any quality in them save two: their capacity to be worked out on the cotton-fields, or their capacity to generate human chattels to be sold for work on the cotton-fields.

These pictures of the patriarchal type are true, but they represent but a small fraction of the larger slave-owners.

It would not be judicious or expedient to rake up the old embers and light again the fires of controversy on the dead past; but those embers are being lighted again by the rash and headstrong political leaders of the Cotton States. It becomes necessary to recall attention to the damning facts which brought about the conditions under which, and by which, Southern men are now being influenced, and to renew the contest with the same domineering caste or faction that is now attempting to degrade the colored man, and to keep him on the level of the beast by disfranchisement and by imposing every other disability upon the colored people that it is in the power of reckless legislation to impose. This faction is already condemned to failure.

And now comes the most remarkable book ever written by a colored man (unless we except the novels of Dumas), which has been lately published under the title of "The Aftermath of Slavery," by Dr. W. A. Sinclair of Howard University.\* In this book, the attention of Northern men is called to the manner in which Northern white men have been disfranchised by the disfranchisement of the Southern Negroes—the older Cotton States, from Louisiana to South Carolina, inclusive, having twice the number of representatives in Congress that their white population would give them (twice the number that New England has,

\* Small, Maynard & Co., Boston.

or that Ohio has, or that many other sections have), owing to the counting of the colored people as units in the distribution of members of Congress, while the Negroes are deprived of their rights under the disfranchising acts, thus giving to every representative from this so-called Southern Cotton Kingdom twice the weight in Congress that one representative has from New England, or from the Pacific States, or from Illinois, or from Ohio. The votes of twenty-six representatives in Congress are neutralized by the votes of twenty-six from the old Cotton States representing Negroes counted but disfranchised.

There is one aspect of this question which has failed to attract the attention of Dr. Sinclair, which I now propose to present. The present effort to present the patriarchal aspect of slavery only serves as a screen to cover up the horrors of slave-breeding. It will fail.

The effort to keep the Negro in the position of a beast of burden will also fail. The great economic forces now in action, and the facts and figures that are now being disclosed, will crush out that influence; and the effort to prove that the Negro is a beast, not a descendant from the same parents as white persons, would simply prove that a very large portion of the white citizens of Virginia and other border States were also beasts. It is now declared that not twenty per cent. of the colored people of the South are of pure Negro origin, and that the race is pervaded by the "best white blood" of the States in which they were born. Man and beast do not propagate; were the generators of the best blood of Virginia beasts?

In 1830, the curse of cotton had spread over the "sunny Southland," displacing almost every other crop. The Atlantic States had formerly been full of large game,—buffalo, deer, wild turkeys: later, full of cattle and stock of every kind; but, after the curse of cotton came down upon these States, Dr. Cloud of Alabama pictured the conditions when he said that "the cotton-planters had blasted the prairies and gullied the hillsides, and, being in possession of the best forage plants of the world, had rendered themselves dependent upon the North for hay to feed their cattle." The profit from cotton-growing had brought the product in 1830 for the first time to 1,000,000 bales, from 35,000 bales in 1793-4, in a single generation after the invention of the Whitney cotton-gin. In each subsequent decade, in favorable

years, 1,000,000 bales were added down to 1850; between 1850 and 1860 nearly 2,000,000; the cotton crops were as follows:

1830—1831.....	1,038,847	bales.		1851—1852.....	3,126,310	bales.
1839—1840.....	2,177,838	bales.		1859—1860.....	4,861,292	bales.

These conditions created such a demand for colored labor that it could not be met in the Slave States in the Cotton zone. It was met by a large supply from these border States, the draft from the breeding States closely corresponding to the increase in the cotton crop; yet the supply did not suffice.

De Bow, the ablest economic student and writer of the South in that period, presented a remarkable thesis, in which he held that, the higher the price of cotton, the less would be the relative product, giving as a reason that each cent a pound added to the price of cotton also added a hundred dollars to the value of the human chattel necessary for its cultivation. The supply of human chattels could not be bred fast enough to meet the necessary demand; then came the effort to reopen the slave trade, which immediately preceded the attempt of the Cotton States to secede from the Union.

It had become plain to the shrewd and far-seeing leaders of the slavocracy that, unless human chattels could be produced or imported in greater numbers, the system of slave labor in these older Cotton States would be destroyed by economic forces. The Germans and others in Texas were raising larger crops of cotton per acre and of better quality than could be produced under the wasteful and costly system of slavery upon the partially exhausted lands of the old Cotton States. The chattel-producing States could not supply the demand; the price of field hands and of good breeding-women was constantly rising. The effort to make Kansas a slave State failed; the Indian Territory when open was sure to be made free. In this way the astute leaders foresaw that the old Cotton States would be surrounded by free-labor cotton-farms, with which it would be impossible for slave labor to compete.

This led to the last desperate effort to reopen the slave trade, and then to secede. The costly system of slave labor would have destroyed itself later, had it not destroyed itself by war.

These facts and forecasts were laid down in my first pamphlet upon "Cheap Cotton by Free Labor," published in 1861. Every prophecy therein made, including the development of the cotton-

seed oil industry, has been more than fulfilled. Yet the work is but half accomplished, and will not be completed until the equal right of every citizen, without distinction of race, color or condition, shall have been fully established on the foundation of the common school.

On my last visit to the South, I met one of the largest cotton-growers and cotton-spinners in the whole section, the son of one who had formerly been the largest planter in his State. He said to me: "We cannot compete with you in Massachusetts until we have established common schools with compulsory attendance for every child in South Carolina, white or colored. That is what has made you prosperous; some of us know it now, and all of us will soon know it."

Under such leaders of intelligence, the Southland will presently be redeemed from its present political misleaders, and will move on the way to the equal conditions of prosperity now enjoyed by all other sections of our common country.

It may also be observed that, from the time of Jefferson down to the decade between 1820 and 1830, many efforts were made to relieve Virginia and other border Slave States from the burden of slavery. Virginia dedicated her great Northwestern Territory to freedom when she granted all her rights to the Nation. But in the decade beginning 1830 all these efforts ceased, for the alleged reason that the Northern Abolitionists had begun to meddle with what did not concern them, and that these States would maintain their own rights to manage their own domestic institutions. The breeding of human chattels for sale to the Cotton States had become the most important and profitable branch of their commerce, and its profits overcame all the influences in support of freedom. How this influence worked is made plain by the figures of the census.

A few exemplars of the patriarchal system tried to maintain humane conditions, but their efforts were futile. Year after year, the slave auctions received larger consignments, and numbers of men and women chained together were weekly driven even from the District of Columbia, even from the capital of the Nation, down to the cotton-fields, to be worked out on the plantations.

These are well-known facts. These statements are based on observation and experience; on the records of history and the records of sales of human chattels in the newspapers of the

South. All records give proof of these abject conditions, by which the present conditions of illiteracy and ignorance have been brought upon these unfortunate Cotton States. Ignorance and illiteracy exist among blacks and whites alike—from which the blacks appear to be emerging more rapidly than the poor whites of the coast lands and in the Piney Woods regions of these States.

The present generation is not responsible for these conditions, but is subjected to the necessity of finding a remedy. This is a national question, and is now recognized as being so.

Present conditions in these old Cotton States bar the way to immigration, either from other sections—unless in colonies capable of establishing a government of law within their own boundaries—or, yet more, from Southern Europe, especially from Italy. The first demand of the intelligent Italian immigrants who are most desirable is for schools for their children. Until a complete system of common schools is fully established, from Mississippi to North Carolina, inclusive, foreign immigrants of the right type, especially Italians, will pass by them into Texas, Oklahoma and other parts of the great Southwest.

A profound change has lately come over even the old Cotton Kingdom. From North Carolina to Alabama, apparently not yet in Mississippi, it is no longer the man who was active in the war that is held in highest repute for the highest office; it is the "educational governor" who is most known, each now being ambitious to equip the State and to give to its people a true Democracy in place of the bastard Democracy that now rules,—the fact being now recognized that the only safe foundation for the government of the people by the people is the public school.

Under the curse of cotton and the oligarchical system of slavery, economic forces tended to the increase of wealth of the few, and to the degradation not only of the Negroes, but of the great mass of the whites. Slavery destroyed itself by civil war, and all the economic forces are now working rapidly to the uplifting of both races. The great tidal wave of education and the establishment of the common school in these backward Cotton States has become a national question, against which the resistance of a political faction will be powerless. The greatest need is in the districts where cotton has been the chief crop; the renovation of the soil will be assured in the same process. It is in these cotton sections that the greater number of illiterates have been found,

both white and black. When a true education is in full vigor, the wasteful system of agriculture will pass; and two bales of cotton will be made on the same plot of land that now yields but one.

The illiteracy of the people of the mountain section above the cotton belt where few slaves were ever held, sometimes called the "Land of the Sky," is of a different type. These mountain people were uninformed rather than ignorant; and, when brought out from their isolation into the textile-factories and other arts, they rapidly prove their ability. To them it is a step upward, as it was to the farmers' daughters of New England, fifty years ago, to leave their isolated dwellings even to work in a cotton-factory fourteen hours a day for meagre earnings. But, like the New England women, as they become informed they demand shorter hours, higher wages and better conditions of life, soon passing through the monotonous conditions of the textile-factory to take up the lesser arts which demand more individual character, yield much higher wages or earnings and far better conditions of life. These people of the mountains have been isolated by the surrounding pall of slavery, so that English forms of speech, obsolete words and practices still prevail among them. They spun and wove their own garments by hand, made their own iron in the wayside forge, and, being largely of Scotch-Irish origin, gave to the South her strongest men,—Calhoun, Stonewall Jackson, William L. Wilson and many others. Their descendants and those of the Huguenots of South Carolina are to-day the coming leaders who will suppress the reactionists, and save these States from the political and economic suicide to which they have been tending.

Under former conditions the social system of the Atlantic Slave States outside the mountain section was one of the strictest caste. There was no race prejudice; there could not be, where nearly every well-born white child was nursed by a Negro mammy, and where probably half the children born of colored women had white fathers. These very conditions developed the most rigid system of caste that ever prevailed in this country.

The patriarchs who cared for their slaves, and who tried to bring them up under Christian conditions, were separated distinctly from the slave-breeding planters. The planters as a class regarded slave-dealers almost as outcasts, although they employed them for purposes of profit. They looked down upon the over-



seers, whom they were compelled to employ in the conduct of their plantations, as inferior persons holding no position in society.

The colored people were divided in the same way. The household Negroes looked down upon the field hands; the field hands belonging to an old family plantation looked down upon the "niggers" in the towns. Whites and blacks alike of the household class, known as "quality," looked down upon the poor whites. Even the Negro field hands regarded the "white trash," as they were called, of the coast lands as a class of beings having even less relation to humanity than the Negroes themselves are now considered to have by the Bourbons and reactionists.

It is out of these conditions that the present prejudice of caste has been developed. Southern men even of high repute and education are almost incapable of throwing off the false conceptions regarding races which have come down to them through generations of ancestors. Calhoun and his associates earnestly believed that the only possible relation in which whites and blacks could live together in the same State was that of master and slave. They were intellectually honest.

There were 4,000,000 slaves in the South in 1860. It cost the North \$4,000,000,000 to remove the curse of slavery from the Southern States. The price of liberty, and of the emancipation of the white man as well as of the black man, was at the rate of \$1,000 for every slave existing in the land in 1860. This is an exact estimate. The expenditures of the Union during the four years of civil war were, disregarding fractions, \$4,000,000,000 in excess of the normal rate of expenditure in time of peace.

It is not to be wondered at that the ignorant and illiterate masses of the Cotton States should be jealous and envious of the greater advancement of their colored neighbors. But it is difficult to comprehend the conditions of mind of otherwise intelligent men, now lessening in number very rapidly, who regard the Negro as of an inferior rather than of a backward race. Many most intelligent Southern men have got beyond this stage, and all will ere long. One of my most valued correspondents, son of one of the great planters, of late holding judicial position in the South, has written me that he regarded the Negro race as, in some respects, the best race in the world,—their virtues more than counterbalancing vices generated under the conditions of slavery. Among these virtues he named their eagerness for edu-

cation; their religious aspirations, as yet misdirected; and, above all, their freedom from vindictiveness and malice, by which the Southern women and children were saved from the horrors that might have occurred, had any other race than the Negro been in the position in which the Negroes were left on the scattered plantations of the South while nearly all the white men entered the Confederate armies. Fortunate, indeed, is it that the colored race is not vindictive. Who can imagine the appalling quality of the race problem, if a vindictive race, oppressed as these colored people have been for centuries, had risen in insurrection and laid waste the Southland when the men were in the army?

The colored people, moved either by their imitative qualities, emulating the position of the white man through their almost overconfidence in the education of the schools, and in their earnest desire to protect themselves from the brutality of their more degraded white neighbors, have segregated themselves and established their own communities in many counties of the South.

But even these humane qualities of the colored people may be changed by violence, lynching and privation of civil rights. In many places they have turned upon their oppressors, and in some sections have formed prosperous communities of their own, in which they can defend themselves and their property.

The New York "World," speaking of the achievements of the colored man since his emancipation, gives this testimony:

"He owns 137,000 farms and houses worth \$725,000,000; he has personal property to the value of \$165,000,000; and he has raised \$10,000,000 for his own education; to propose that the Nation shall step backward in the face of such a stepping forward, is a curious form of argument to prove the superiority of the dominant white men."

But this is what the misrepresentatives of these Atlantic Cotton States are trying to do, at the risk of provoking a war of races that would put their States back a half-century into a worse barbarism than that of slavery. Southern men of intelligent thought, who will ere long become the true leaders of the South, fully comprehend the moral stupidity and economic folly of the policy now being followed in most of these States.

The present political misleaders declare that the Negro or colored laborer is the best in the world, necessary to meet the existing conditions of the South, and are imposing fines upon the emissaries of other States who may try to induce colored laborers

to migrate from the Atlantic coast; and yet, with inconceivable stupidity, they declare openly in the presence of these very laborers that they are inferior and incapable, that they are generated by beasts, and that they are only fit to be harnessed to a plough alongside the mule. The force of folly could no further go. The disfranchisement of citizens of the United States, counted as units, cannot stand when the North comprehends that for every Negro disfranchised one white man, holding these stupid and brutal opinions in the South, counts double in Congress and in the Electoral College. When the North becomes aware that one intelligent voter in the North is disfranchised with every colored citizen in the South, the representation in Congress will be adjusted under the mandatory provisions of the Constitution, so as to remedy this wrong.

The Island of Jamaica gives a complete example. For fifty years after emancipation, the same effort was made to keep the Negro in the sugar-factory and on the sugar-plantation, by putting differential taxes on his supplies, on the roof of his cabin and on his windows, this effort culminating in the horrors of 1865 under Governor Eyre. The disgrace of these conditions aroused the English people to the folly and injustice of the course which corresponded to the one which is now being pursued in the Atlantic Cotton States. A sane and just method of administration was adopted in Jamaica under humane governors; the colored people were freed from their disabilities, encouraged in their efforts to make progress in art and industry. To-day the Island of Jamaica is peaceful; white women, without escorts, pass over the island in perfect safety, dwelling for weeks on the hills among the peasants, all of whom are colored. Industry is progressing, and the question of color has disappeared in a large community where the colored people outnumber the whites in greater measure than in any State in this Union.

In proof of the conditions developed in this treatise, the subsequent table will give the facts and figures.

In the compilation of the census of 1900 the colored population, in part or wholly of Negro blood, are termed Negroes, to distinguish them from other colored races.

The relative gain in the Negro population of the Cotton States and of the border States from which they derived their supply of human chattels is disclosed by the census tables.

## NEGRO POPULATION BY STATES.\*

*States Which Supplied Field Hands.*

	1830.	1840.	1860.
Delaware .....	19,147	19,524	21,627
Maryland .....	155,932	151,815	171,131
Dist. of Columbia.....	12,271	13,055	14,316
Virginia .....	517,105	498,829	548,907
Kentucky .....	170,130	189,575	236,167
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	874,585	872,798	992,148

*States Which Imported Field Hands.*

No. Carolina.....	265,144	268,549	361,522
So. Carolina.....	323,322	335,314	412,320
Georgia .....	220,017	283,697	465,698
Florida .....	16,345	26,534	62,677
Alabama .....	119,121	255,571	437,770
Mississippi .....	66,178	196,577	437,404
Louisiana .....	126,298	193,954	350,373
Texas .....			182,921
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	1,136,425	1,560,196	2,710,685

The Negro population of the Chattel-producing States slightly diminished between 1830 and 1840. Between 1830 and 1860 it increased only 117,563, or thirteen and one-half per cent.

On the other hand, the Negro population of the Chattel-consuming States increased from 1830 to 1840 423,761, or a fraction over thirty-seven per cent., and 1,574,260 between 1830 and 1860, or nearly one hundred and thirty-nine per cent.

It will be observed that the increase of colored population in the Chattel-producing and Chattel-consuming States, combined, carried the number from 2,011,010 in 1830 to 3,702,833 in 1860, constituting nearly the whole of the slave population of the country at the beginning of the Civil War. The increase in these States numbered 1,691,823, at the rate of eighty-four per cent. At this rate, the production of human chattels, in specific Cotton States themselves, numbered 954,597. The number of chattels imported from the producing States was a little under 740,000.

With a constantly increasing price, at a fair average, the income to the Chattel-producing States, at a fraction over four hundred dollars each, yielded a revenue during the thirty years of \$300,000,000, or \$10,000,000 a year, making this a much more profit-

\* Tennessee is omitted because a large section is in the best cotton belt and the migration was from one section of the State to another.

Arkansas and Missouri are omitted because they have always been more of the Western than Southern type, their progress having been greatly retarded by slavery before emancipation.

able branch of productive energy than continuing the cultivation of worn-out tobacco lands or other branches of agriculture.

The principle of liberty and of equal rights, established by Washington, embodied in the Declaration of Independence by Jefferson, enacted in the Constitution by Madison, supported by Patrick Henry and sustained by John Marshall, all of Virginia, put into force by all the great Southern patriots of the Revolution, developed by Adams and Hancock and taught in every common school of the North, cannot be suppressed by the degenerate successors of these great statesmen, whose names are now inscribed upon the frames of the chairs in the Senate and House of Representatives in Washington of which the seats are now vacant. It is the principle by which the Nation lives and moves and has its being. The moral, economic and political forces, even in the old Cotton States, are now moving to fill the chairs from which the misrepresentatives of the Southland will soon be removed to nameless obscurity. The reconstruction of the Nation will then be complete, and that day is not far distant.

The writer was a Free Soil voter in 1848; he was conversant with all the conditions of that and the war period. After slavery had destroyed itself in the Civil War, he and other conservative men concurred with Governor John A. Andrew in opposing unrestricted Negro suffrage, advocating the enfranchisement of white and black alike under such equal conditions, without distinction of race or color, as each State might impose in the matter of educational, property or tax qualifications. Their efforts to establish these conservative conditions in respect to suffrage were defeated by the aggressive attempts of the unreconstructed people of the Cotton States to reduce the freemen to a condition of serfage worse than that of slavery.

Step by step, the utter lack of comprehension of the right methods of dealing with the race question forced upon the North the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments of the Constitution, and lastly the Fifteenth Amendment, under which it will become mandatory upon Congress to readjust the number of representatives in Congress and in the Electoral College to the conditions that are now being disclosed. When citizens are disfranchised on the color line in disregard of the organic law of the country, the representation of the States in which this wrong is committed must be reduced in due proportion. Before that necessity arises,

however, the sane and safe leaders of Southern opinion will suppress the reactionary element that now has a short and temporary control.

The following figures indicate the relative representation of white citizens in the Cotton States as compared to the representation of white citizens in different groups of Northern States:

COTTON STATES.				No. of White Citizens to each Representative.
	Citizens, Colored.,	Citizens, White.	Representatives, No. in Congress.	
La. ....	650,804	729,612	7	103,127
Miss. ....	907,630	641,200	8	
Ala. ....	827,307	1,001,152	9	
Fla. ....	230,730	297,333	3	
Ga. ....	1,030,813	1,181,294	11	
S. C. ....	782,321	557,807	7	
N. C. ....	624,469	1,263,603	10	
	5,054,074	5,672,001	55	
	5,672,001			
	10,726,075			

In the above States, colored citizens are disfranchised.

NORTHERN STATES.			No. White Citizens to each Representative
	White Citizens.	Representatives in Congress.	
Illinois .....	4,734,873	25	189,395
Ohio .....	4,060,204	21	193,344
Maine .....	692,226	4	
N. H. ....	410,791	2	
Vt. ....	342,771	2	
Mass. ....	2,769,764	14	
R. I. ....	419,050	2	
Conn. ....	892,424	5	
Total .....	5,527,026	29	190,587
Cal. ....	1,402,727	8	
Colo. ....	529,046	3	
Idaho .....	154,495	1	
Montana .....	226,283	1	
Nevada .....	35,405	1	
Ore. ....	394,582	2	
Utah .....	272,465	1	
Wash. ....	496,304	3	
Wyoming .....	89,051	1	
Total .....	3,600,358	21	171,445
Ind. ....	2,458,502	13	
Wis. ....	2,057,911	11	
N. Dak. ....	311,712	2	
S. Dak. ....	380,714	2	
Total .....	5,208,839	28	186,030

In conclusion it will be observed that the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina now elect, by counting disfranchised negroes, twenty-six representatives in Congress out of fifty-five. This number—twenty-six—is in excess of the number to which they would have been entitled under the census of 1900 on their white population counted separately.

The political leaders of these States cannot be so foolish as to suppose that the Northern States will submit to this disparity, after it has been made plain that the people of these States will not remedy the evil and restore the franchise without distinction of race, under such conditions of educational or property qualifications as may to each of them be deemed suitable.

It will, however, be very certain that, when it has been made plain that Congress will remedy this disparity and will take away from these States as many representatives as now stand for the disfranchised Negroes, the same political leaders who have been so keen to get them disfranchised will become as keen to have the franchise extended as widely as possible, without regard to race or color, in order that they may possibly maintain their present number of representatives in Congress and their proportional number of representatives in the Electoral College.

I have attained repute in the Cotton States by speaking plainly whenever I have met their leading men face to face, or have written articles in the Southern press. I have contrasted the past, the present and the future that is within their grasp; I have followed out the counsels of Governor Andrew to his friends, to enter upon a vigorous pursuit of peace. This treatise will create animosity and will bring out personal abuse and denunciation, but that will come from the very class of political misleaders who are retarding the progress of the whole South, and whose influence must be overcome by men of thought and comprehension and of true patriotism in the South itself, in whose support these facts are now made plain.

EDWARD ATKINSON.