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THE AMERICAN NEGRO ACADEMY.

THE ULTIMATE CRIMINAL

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THE ULTIMATE CRIMINAL.

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It is the fashion nowadays for every one with a stone in his hand to take a shy at the poor Negro on account of his sins of commission and omission. It is enough that some member of the race is caught *flagrante delicto* or merely on suspicion of evil doing to get himself into the public pillory and the rest of the colored people into our national rogues' gallery, where they evoke instantly the loud lamentation of white saints and sinners alike, and the statistical and sophistical conclusions of a lot of fools and hypocrites. Now do not misunderstand me. I do not deny that Negroes commit crimes. Not at all, for I know full well that they do—altogether too many for their own good. But what I object to among other things is that America, because of the crimes of individual Negroes or because of the suspected crimes of individual Negroes, draws an omnibus indictment against the moral character of the whole race, which is monstrously unjust and wicked.

Who cares to inquire into the origin of Negro crime, or into the causes which have contributed mightily to produce the Negro criminal? The book of the Genesis of this man's crimes awaits to be written by an impartial and sympathetic seeker after truth. The causes which have operated for fifty years to produce Negro criminals will some day, I trust, be

traced without fear or bias to their source. I do not pretend to possess any scientific qualification for such a task, but I do intend in these imperfect remarks to try to indicate in outline merely the dismal stream of these causes during the last half century, hoping thereby to cast a little light on a dark and difficult subject: namely, how out of hostile and unequal social, industrial and political conditions Negro crime emerged and why Negro criminals abound.

To say that individuals and races are the creatures of circumstances—that they are the products of their social heredity and environment—is to state a commonplace in the accepted doctrines of science to-day. It is therefore perfectly safe to postulate that the greatest circumstance in the life of the Negro before emancipation was the institution of slavery. For it furnished for two and a half centuries both his social heredity and his environment, and so shaped his growth and character along moral, religious and industrial lines. Chattel slaves had no rights, the most rudimentary, which their southern masters were bound to respect. They did not, for example, possess that most elementary of rights, the ownership of self and of the products of their labor. They were the legal property of others and so were the products of their labor. They did not own the cabins they slept in or the clothes they wore or the food they ate or the tools they worked with or the air they breathed or the water they drank or the bit of ground that they were buried in at last, any more than did the cattle of those self same masters. The slave system owned the minds and bodies of its victims, who loved but had no legal title to their mates, or to the offspring who were born to them any more than did the cattle of the masters own their mates or the young which were born to them. The slaves were rated as so many human machines by the masters for the production of wealth for themselves and to add to their liberty and leisure and pursuit of happiness. Amid such evil conditions ignorance necessarily abounded and moral degradation deposited its slime, generation after generation, over the souls of masters and slaves alike. And in this moral mud there bred apace bestiality and cruelty, superstition and sensuality, tyranny and fear—the black brood of man’s inhumanity to man.

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At the close of the war which destroyed slavery the two races emerged together into the midst of vast changes. The old social structure had been disrupted in the civil convulsion, and the old political order likewise. The slave half of the national house had tumbled about former masters and slaves. The slave race possessed no more and knew no more as freedmen than they had possessed or known as slaves. Yes, they possessed themselves and the hard hands which God had given them for their support. But being landless and moneyless they were dependent for employment on the old master class. This put them at an immense economic disadvantage as a labor class on the threshold of their new life of freedom, and in the power of the old master class. The outlook for the new freedmen under these circumstances was not propitious. All the same these people, poor and ignorant and at the mercy of a ruthless employer class, were happy as children in the delight of their newfound freedom. The sound of their childlike joy was heard in the land amid the grim desolations of war and the sullen faces of their old masters. Care free and fear free, in spite of unfriendly conditions and a threatening outlook, they gave themselves up to such joy as God has rarely given in the history of the world to four millions of people. Now no race can pass through such a spiritual experience without being the better for it. For great happiness like great suffering operates oftentimes as a moral purifier. Before the overwhelming fact that they could no longer be bought and sold—that they could no longer be separated from their loved ones, these simple black folk fell in transports of gratitude before God, their mighty deliverer, their everlasting Father. Love was in their mouths and love was in their hearts. Cheerful they were by nature and hopeful, and gifted withal with an extraordinary amount of the milk of human kindness. Service was natural and easy for them, and the cherishing of friends and foes in their need; but resentfulness and revenge moved them hardly at all during their long years of bondage. Comparatively few crimes against persons or property had been recorded against them before emancipation. The few slave insurrections or attempted slave insurrections were exceptions to the general tenor of their peaceable disposition and conduct, to the uniform and singular absence of ill-will, of a spirit of revenge in them as a race.

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This gentle trait was strikingly illustrated during the war of the rebellion. They had opportunity enough and provocation enough, God knows, to attack the property and the lives of the defenseless families of their hard task-masters during those four dreadful years of sectional strife. But in their beautiful simplicity and kindness of heart and fidelity to the sacred and amazing trust reposed in them—the most sacred and amazing ever reposed in a slave race by a master race in the history of the world—they let their terrible opportunity for revenge pass them by and seized instead the noble one to feed and cherish the helpless women and children of masters who were fighting to rivet the chains of slavery on them and on their children forever. This behavior of the slaves is the supreme example which American Christianity has yet given of the vital presence of the spirit of its divine founder in its midst. No other act in its whole history approaches it in simple grandeur of forgiveness and service. And it came literally out of the humble lives of a much oppressed and long suffering race.

This simple and kindly black folk issued then out of their two and a half centuries of bondage without malice toward the whites, without any of the violent emotions which lead to the commission of great crimes. The only violent emotion which stirred their child-like minds, which filled almost to bursting their kindly hearts was deep thankfulness to God and to Mr.

Lincoln for their deliverance—an emotion which no pen can describe and no tongue can put into words. Out of such kindly hearts, out of such deep and holy emotions crime does not come and it would not have come had there been no injection into the race soul of the Negro of new and bitter experiences of wrong at the hands of the whites. But this is exactly what actually took place. On the simple and kindly hearts of the new freedmen the old master class might have graven large the law of peace and goodwill. All that this child-like race needed at this initial stage of their education and forming character were wise and sympathetic guidance and treatment on the part of the whites in order to convert all their deep and holy emotions into moral and civic values, into social and industrial service to the South and to the nation at one and the same time. Did the blacks get this wise and sympathetic guidance and treatment at the hands of the whites? To answer this question is to open up the whole subject of the causation of Negro crime during the last fifty years. And this I will try to do as concisely and clearly as possible.

The first act of the South after the war was most unfriendly to the blacks. For it was state legislation which remanded them to a new species of bondage. Southern slaves they had been but by the new labor legislation they were transformed into Southern serfs, chained to the soil by cunningly devised laws to regulate their labor and movement. Force and violence toward the blacks were relied upon to put through this legislative and administrative program. This program was the cause of Northern interference in the Southern situation at this juncture. But when Congress intervened by its reconstruction measures to defeat the reactionary program of the South, there swept over that section a crime-storm of devastating fury. The old master class organized their purpose in respect to the Negro, and their hatred of everything Northern into a secret society known as the “Ku Klux Klan,” which was nothing else than a gigantic conspiracy for the commission of crime. Lawlessness and violence filled the land, and terror stalked abroad by day and night. The “Ku Klux Klan” burned and murdered by day, and it burned and murdered by night. The Southern states had actually relapsed into barbarism. During that period a new generation was conceived and born to the South by both races—a generation that was literally conceived in lawlessness and born into crime-producing conditions. Lawlessness was its inheritance and the red splotch of violence its birthmark.

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The period covered by this crime-storm was a bad way to begin the education of the Negroes in respect for law, in self control and in civilization. For they found no law strong enough to protect them in their lives or property or freedom from the murderous attacks of that terrible secret organization. Education in self-control, and in respect for constituted authority became impossible where the dominating feeling of the Negroes was one of terror. And as for civilization it was beaten down by the red hand of violence. The blacks during these years were crushed between two irreconcilable forces, two antagonistic governments which were locked in a death grapple for possession of that section. The one government was open and regular, while the other was secret and lawless. The first was supported by a few native and Northern whites and by the great body of the blacks, and the second was upheld by the great body of the native whites under the trained and ruthless leadership of the old master class, who would have no government, no social order which was not set up by themselves.

During those dark years the blacks were much more sinned against than sinning. They were sinned against by their white leaders, who in the main used them to advance their personal and party interest, and who employed the positions they thus gained to steal the people’s money, to enrich themselves at the expense of the states. There were colored leaders who followed closely in the footsteps of the white leaders in perverting public trusts to corrupt ends, but the chief malefactors, the biggest scoundrels were members of the white race. In these circumstances the blacks were the helpless victims of the misrule of their own leaders and of the organized lawlessness of the Southern whites. In their need they asked for bread and were given a stone, they required sympathetic and wise leadership and were handed instead a bunch of scorpions. They prayed for peace and for that happiness which goes with freedom, and there swept over them for six dreadful years a crime-storm which filled their nights and days, the season of their planting and the season of their reaping with terror and destruction, and they just out of the house of bondage. They were able in these circumstances to get from the whites no lesson in obedience to law, in reverence for constituted authority, for as we have seen those selfsame whites were everywhere breaking the law and beating down and destroying constituted authority. Nor did they get any training in personal and civic righteousness from their own leaders of either race. For those leaders initiated them promptly by the power of example into the great and flourishing American art and industry of graft.

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This much however ought to be said in justice to the carpet-bag governments, namely, that bad as they were the lawlessness and violence of the Southern whites were a great deal worse. For while some good can be placed to the credit of those governments nothing but bad can possibly be set down to the account of Southern lawlessness and violence. To the carpet-bag governments belongs the introduction into the South for the first time of the democratic principles of equality, and of the right of each child in the state, regardless of race or color, to an education at the hands of the state. These are two vital things which the South needed then and which it needs to-day but which the old master class opposed then and which their successors oppose to-day. That is what the whites did to educate the blacks during the most impressionable period of their new freedom in orderly government and in

civilization. That was the way their education in citizenship and character building began and that was the way it proceeded until the year 1876.

In that year the two irreconcilable governments grappled in a final struggle at the polls for mastery and possession of that section. When the smoke of battle cleared over South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana, the Southern forces of re-action were in complete possession of those states, and the solid South had become an accomplished fact. Nothing stood now between the blacks and their ancient enemy. They were again at the mercy of the old master class, who returned promptly to the execution of their interrupted program of inequality and injustice. As the whites could not now reestablish constitutionally their old slave system, or directly their new serf system they proceeded to do the next best thing, that is to construct a caste system based on race and color. Such a system, once firmly established, would fix the status of the blacks as a permanently inferior caste, and to that extent would render nugatory the three great amendments to the constitution. For members of an inferior caste would by the force of circumstances, law, or no law, be deprived of certain rights civil and political enjoyed by members of the superior caste. Citizenship of the one caste would not mean the same thing as citizenship of the other. The lower caste could not possibly possess the same rights—constitution or no constitution—which the upper caste possessed. Inequality became thus the chief corner stone of the new Southern edifice. Under this society there grew up two moral standards and two legal standards for the government of the races. For example what under such a system is bad for a black man to do to a member of the white race might not be regarded as bad at all if done by a white man to a member of the black race. The cruel and iniquitous sex relations of the races in the South has grown out of this caste system. Under it we have the double moral standard and the double legal standard operating throughout that section with a vengeance. A white man cannot with impunity seduce another white man's daughter or wife in the South. But were he to seduce a colored man's daughter or wife the case would be wholly different. No bastardy process lies in favor of the colored girl as lies in favor of her white sister under like circumstances, and no maintenance could she possibly obtain for her child from the white man who wronged her. Intermarriage between the races has been made illegal by every Southern state and by some Northern states also. Such a law makes colored women the safe quarry of white men, and nowhere in the South do law or public opinion impose upon them any deterrent punishment, moral or legal, for their crime, but quite the opposite. For such men do not lose standing in Southern society or the church or the state in consequence of their sin. In all this sexual inequality and iniquity the South has eyes but sees not and ears but hears not what is taking place everywhere in its midst.

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On the other hand what happens to the black man who ventures to look upon a white woman with love or carnal desire, or who is even suspected of doing so? Ask Judge Lynch, ask the blind and murderous sex fury of white men, the red male rage of Southern mobs. Nevertheless black men cannot be made to see the difference between the lust of black men and the lust of white men, or to acknowledge the justice of such a distinction. Hold the blacks responsible by all means for the crimes they commit, but hold the whites responsible also for creating social and legal conditions which lead directly to the growth of crime among both races. Race and color not efficiency and character are the basis of the Southern caste system, and such a system produces unavoidably ill-will, oppressions, and resentments between the races which lead directly or indirectly to the commission of crime. For all those who are black, regardless of what nature and education intend them to be are born into a fixed state of social and political inferiority, and all those who are white, regardless of what nature and education intend them to be are born into a fixed state of social and political superiority, and for no other or better reason than that those of the first class are black, and those of the second class are white. Civilization finds it well nigh impossible to advance under such iron bound conditions and against such a fatal obstruction to progress, while civic righteousness must certainly share the same fate. Such social injustice is as sure to provoke crime as stagnant water is to produce disease. Yet, in spite of this iniquitous caste system the leaven of democracy, of equality has found lodgment in the black man's mind, and he craves the chance to become all that the white man has become and to do all that the white man does by virtue of his American freedom and citizenship. Nothing less than this is going to satisfy the blacks, the Southern caste system and appearances in spots among the blacks themselves, to the contrary notwithstanding.

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But there is yet another aspect of the same subject, which tends to produce the same result. I refer to the Southern policy of civil and political repression and oppression of its colored population in order to keep them within their caste of inferiority and subordination to the whites. Discontent under such oppressive conditions is sure to arise among the colored people, and this because of their growth and of the existence of the hard and fast lines within which this growth must go on. For this kind of discontent the South has no vent such as free institutions provide. Its caste system sits upon this safety valve of democracy. Much of the crime committed by oppressed peoples is in the nature of fullness of life seeking greater freedom, of pent up energies seeking an outlet, and much of the crime committed by oppressors is in the nature of attempts, perilous always, to sit upon this safety valve of popular governments, which is intended to relieve dangerous pressure within the steam-chest of human expansion and progress. But the South is determined to keep the Negro down however great may be his effort to rise. He is to be kept down by brute force if he cannot be kept down in any other way, below the social and industrial and political level of the lowest and most worthless of the whites, because he is black and because they are

white.

This is the meaning of the Southern movement for segregating the races, of its jim-crow car laws and waiting-rooms. This is the meaning of the Negro's exclusion from dining-cars and from restaurants along the line of Southern railroads. He pays the same fare as the white passenger but he is given inferior accommodations and in many instances these accommodations are monstrously unequal and inferior. He is black and therefore the same law which protects the white passenger against bad accommodations does not apply to him. He is at the mercy of railroads, which may treat him as badly as they choose, and there is none to say them nay. Why? Because all these iniquitous distinctions and discriminations serve to teach colored men and women, however intelligent and wealthy and respectable, that their intelligence and wealth and respectability do not entitle them to equal treatment with the most vicious and worthless of the whites. At the moral retchings and manly revolt of the victim against this unequal treatment the South either sneers or else grows angry, because it affects to see in them the Negro's ambition for social equality, his secret desire to leave his class and to enter that of the whites and to marry white women. And so down on the safety valve which free institutions provide, and regardless of the steam pressure within, the South has planted its brutal might with reckless and insolent disregard of consequences.

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Everywhere the treatment of the Negro is the same, and everywhere the purpose of the South is plain. What with its contract labor laws and emigration laws and vagrancy laws and convict-lease and plantation-lease and credit systems the South is working mightily, night and day, to reduce the Negro laborer to wage slavery, to fix him in an industrial position where he shall have no rights which the white employer class is bound to respect. Negro labor toils and produces without adequate reward or protection against the rapacity of Southern employers. What it gets as its share bears no comparison with what the employer gets as his share. The employer gets wealth while the Negro gets a bare subsistence. I am speaking of course broadly, for there are many Negroes who get more than a bare subsistence out of the products of their labor, and that in spite of bad and unequal laws and conditions. But the great mass of Negro agricultural labor is exploited and plundered by the white employer class, and kept poor, because being poor they are esteemed less capable of giving the South trouble. It is the only labor class in the South that is deprived of the right to vote, and so is rendered powerless to influence legislation and administration and the courts in its favor. If the poverty of Negro labor renders it as a class less capable of giving the employer class trouble this poverty is at the same time a crime breeder and a huge crime breeder into the bargain.

Take this case which has just been decided favorably for the colored laborer by the United States Supreme Court, as a fair example of what Southern law and administration are doing to reduce the Negro to a condition of helpless industrial slavery:

An Alabama case, involving charges of peonage in connection with the operation of a convict labor law, now is before the Supreme Court, where its disposition may have an important bearing on similar statutes in other Southern States. The government contends that the Alabama statute permits peonage in violation of the Federal Constitution.

The test case is that of a colored man named E. W. Fields, who was convicted in Monroe County of larceny. Upon his failure to pay his fine, J. A. Reynolds, a plantation owner, became surety for him, and, as permitted by the Alabama law, contracted to work out his indebtedness during nine months at the rate of \$6 a month and keep. The government charges that Reynolds later had Fields arrested for failing to complete the contract. As a result of the arrest, Fields, in court, entered into contract to work fourteen months for G. W. Broughton, another plantation owner.

Both Reynolds and Broughton were indicted by the Federal government, but the Federal district court for southern Alabama held that peonage had not been committed.

I want to ask your attention in passing to a few points about this case. First the Negro laborer is convicted on a charge of larceny. This charge might have been trumped up by some white person who wanted the Negro's service. I do not know. I would not take the word of a Southern Court on this point. At any rate the Negro laborer is convicted and a fine is imposed upon him, which he is unable to pay. Now comes the opportunity of the white employer, who happens to be conveniently in Court, to come to the rescue of the poor Negro. He pays the fine and the Negro contracts to pay him back by giving him nine months of his labor. The Negro thereupon enters upon the performance of this contract, but fails for some reason, not stated, to finish it. How long he worked does not appear either, but this much does. He is haled into Court a second time and a second time a fine is imposed upon him. And again an employer, who is opportunely present at the second trial, pays the fine. The Negro now binds himself to the service of this second man for fourteen months, which, to use a slang expression, is surely "going some." At this stage of the game, however, the United States Government stepped into the case, otherwise a third charge might have been preferred in due time, and again the term of involuntary service lengthened, and so on ad infinitum until death released the victim. This is a well-known Southern method for multiplying Negro criminals to meet the demands of Southern employers of cheap labor. It is

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a danger to which every colored man is exposed in the South, because Southern Courts are as a rule administered in the interest of the employer class wherever the Negro is concerned. There have been a few notable instances of Southern Judges who have refused to lend their Courts to this iniquitous business, like Judge Emory Speer, of Georgia, and the late Judge Jones, of Alabama, but such examples are like angels' visits—few and far between in that land of race repression and oppression.

Take another and different case, which is common enough in the South also. It is, like the preceding clipping, taken from the *Washington Post*:

LYNCHED BY MOB OF 1,000.

LITTLE GIRL'S ASSAILANT DRAGGED FROM JAIL AS TROOPS ARE ASSEMBLING.

Shreveport, La., May 12.—Edward Hamilton, colored, held on the charge of attacking a 10-year old white girl, was taken from the parish jail shortly after noon and lynched.

For three hours a mob of 1,000 men and boys stood in the rain outside the jail doors, hammering away with a heavy railroad iron at the barrier. Steel saws finally were used, and entrance was gained by the mob. Sheriff J. P. Flourney had telegraphed the governor for troops and orders had been sent the Shreveport company of the national guard to report for service. Before the company could be assembled the prisoner had been taken from the jail. A rope was placed about Hamilton's neck and he was dragged half a block from the jail to a telephone pole opposite the parish courthouse, and strung up. A knife was left sticking in the body.

Here we have Judge Lynch's Court in full operation in the execution of one suspected Colored criminal and the manufacture at the same time of a thousand white criminals. This Colored man was only suspected of the usual crime. There was no trial of him to find the facts, not even by Judge Lynch himself. Edward Hamilton might have been guilty and then again he might have been innocent. I think that a private inquiry into his case subsequent to his murder, pointed to his probable innocence. But he was an object of suspicion, and that was enough to justify the act of his murderers. If the mob failed to lynch the guilty and lynched instead an innocent man, it was so much the worse for the innocent man, not at all for the mob, however red their hands were with that innocent man's blood. Why? Because that innocent man was black, and because his murder helps to uphold white supremacy over millions of people whose only offense is that they are black. Into the violent death of a man like Hamilton there might not be instituted any official inquiry at all in many parts of the South any more than if he had been a horse or a dog. But if there happens to be an official inquiry the usual verdict is that "the deceased came to his death by the hands of a person or persons unknown," and that ends the matter so far as the Negro is concerned. But it does not end the matter so far as the South is concerned, for the Devil will exact his share of the black deed from that section to the uttermost farthing. What has such a mob done? In the murder of one black man, whether innocent or guilty, the South has, as in the case of Hamilton, made hundreds of white criminals, has tainted the blood of whole communities like Shreveport with the virus of lawlessness and crime. In this same Shreveport there were five colored men lynched in ten days and eight in a year, and one white woman testified at an investigation conducted by the attorney general's office that she rode in an automobile crowded with men eighteen miles to see an old colored man burned at the stake! Like begets like, and crime crime, and there is no help for it. Because what a state sows that it shall surely reap. If it sow sin it shall reap suffering and shame, and if it sow the wind it shall likewise reap the whirlwind. Is not the South sowing into the souls of both races the seeds of sin and violence, and shall it not then reap its full crop of crime and misery, the wild and anarchic harvest of the whirlwind?

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Hard indeed is the lot of the Negro whether in the country or the city of the South, and in those of the North too for that matter. For wherever he goes he carries the marks of his race with him, and that is the essence of his offense in America. His lot is practically the same everywhere. He faces either in city or country the white man's courts and police power and race prejudice and his industrial and residential exclusiveness and jealousies, but above all he faces the white man's church with its undisguised color-phobia, with its virtual rejection of the brotherhood of man in respect to all races who happen not to be white. They are in the regard of this church unclean and socially beyond the pale of its Christian fellowship. They are salvable to be sure but from afar by missionary efforts, the farther away the better, in China and Japan, in India and Africa. For there this church is in no danger of race contamination in its pews and at its altars and in its homes. The American church is saying with the spirit of the unseeing Peter of old, "Not so Lord, we have never accepted any man who is brown or black or yellow as really our brother, for we are white and Thou hast made us of different clay, of purer blood than all these millions of brown and black and yellow peoples. Thou hast made us white and white we mean to remain, Thy common fatherhood and the brotherhood of all these alien races to the contrary notwithstanding. We try to be humble Lord, but we have never yet succeeded in humbling the proud blood which Thou hast given us to the level of brotherhood with these strange dark peoples."

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That is the spirit which the Negro encounters in the American church; that is the spirit which crushes him down and crowds him back whenever he tries to rise and advance. He

and his are denied the White man's chance to make the best of themselves and to get the most out of themselves. And when many of them fail, as fail they must, they are beaten with many bitter words by this so-called Christian people because of this failure, and when some succeed in spite of the gates of this hell of race hatred and oppression they are beaten with even more bitter words and sometimes with bitter blows, and told to stay where they are put behind the poorest and most worthless of the whites in America's long procession of progress and civilization. Is it any wonder that crime emerges out of such cruel and unequal conditions? The wonder is that the colored criminal class is not larger and more dangerous to person and property. Take a glance into the alleys of misery, into the ghettos of wrong where human beings beaten by other human beings stronger than they in the battle of life are penned in their destitution and wretchedness to live and die like poisoned rats in a hole, a prey to heat in summer and cold in winter and disease the year round, a prey to vice, a prey to the saloons which the white man thrusts upon them to steal away their last nickel and the remnant of their self respect. One need not be a prophet to foresee that out of all this injustice and inequality God's avenging angel will come some day with sword, double-edged and deadly with disease and crime, to smite and to blight this land where white people having eyes refuse to see whither all their race injustice is leading, and ears but who are deaf to the prayer of Christ's little ones crying for a man's chance to get with others into the sun and to grow the free and beautiful life which God intended them to grow when first they came into the world, and that whether they are black or red or brown or yellow.

In the matter of education, to recur again to the South in particular, the blacks are most outrageously discriminated against in favor of the whites, who have more and better school buildings, more and better paid teachers even where the blacks out-number them, longer school terms and a much higher per capita rate of the public school funds than have the children of the blacks. The problem of the South appears to be not how much education but how little it can possibly give the blacks in comparison with what it gives the whites. In all this educational business the South reasons that the blacks must be kept well in the rear of the whites, because they are to remain a permanently inferior class. That section is not anxious to reduce the illiteracy of its colored population and to raise the standard of their intelligence, for it thinks that an ignorant labor class is less difficult to manage than an intelligent one. Ignorance is indeed apt to be stolid and submissive under circumstances in which intelligence becomes restless and discontented. Therefore the South has little love or use for an intelligent labor class, but desires above all things an ignorant one, and does what in it lies to hinder educational progress among its colored population. But ignorance is a breeder of crime just as poverty is. They are the parents of much of the crime committed by the Negroes just as they are the parents of much of the crime committed by the whites. Our criminal classes do many things which the law forbids to be done not because they are of one race or color or of another race or color, but mainly because they are poor and ignorant. Who then in these circumstances are the ultimate criminal, those who are unwillingly poor and ignorant, or those who make and keep them so by bad and unequal laws, by bad and unequal treatment?

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Such is the story of what the whites did to educate the blacks at the most impressionable period of their freedom in democracy, in orderly government and Christian civilization. And it is the story of that education during the last fifty years. There was never kindness to the blacks and sympathy from the Southern whites as of men to men. The human touch which makes, or which ought to make, all men brothers has been woefully wanting in the whites as a race towards the blacks as a race. There has been kindness and perhaps much kindness from individual white people to individual Colored people, but never from the mass of the whites to the mass of the blacks, but just the contrary. Instead of kindness of the one race to the other there has been increasing ill-will and active injustice as of one enemy to another. If crime there has been in consequence of this deplorable, this terrible fact who is the ultimate criminal? At the bar of history and at the bar of God, I ask, Who is the ultimate criminal?

Transcriber's Note: Printer's inconsistencies in the use of "childlike" and "child-like" have been retained.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ULTIMATE CRIMINAL ***

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