

NEGROES OF TO-DAY

THOMAS NELSON PAGE FINDS THAT
THEY DO NOT ADVANCE.

CRIME IS ON THE INCREASE

Growth of Superstition Among Them
Since the War Causes More Brutal
Outbreaks—He Has Also Fallen Back
as a Wage-Earner.

(Thos. Nelson Page in May McClure's.)
Unhappily for those who claim that
the negro race has shown extraordi-
nary thrift since its emancipation thir-
ty-eight years ago, the records, when
examined, fail to bear out the conten-
tion.

Such is the showing of statistics. But
under this economic presentation lies
a deeper question. What have the
thousands of churches and schools and
colleges, maintained at the cost of a
hundred and forty million dollars, pro-
duced? What kind of men and women
have they turned out? What fruits
have they brought forth, of moral
stamina; of character; of purity of
life; of loftiness or even correctness of
ideals? These are the true tests of
progress.

To reach a correct answer to these
questions, we may inquire first: Has
the percentage of crime decreased in
the race generally? Has the wage-
earning capacity of the race generally
increased in proportion to the rise of
wages? Has the race generally im-
proved, morally and mentally? Is the
relative position of the race to that
of the white race higher than it was?

Study of the question discovers that
almost all of the intellectual advance
in the negro race is confined to the
upper fraction of the race; that, per-
haps, nine-tenths of the property ac-
cumulated has been accumulated by
this class and by the other fraction
that belongs to the second class who
were trained in slavery, and that,
measured by the ordinary standards
of character, intellect and civic stand-
ing, the other nine-tenths of the race,
so far from advancing in any way, have
either stood stagnant or have retro-
graded.

According to the United States Cen-
sus of 1890, the native white criminals
in the United States numbered 40,471;
the native whites whose parents were
also native-born numbered 21,037; the
negro criminals (whose parents were
native) numbered 24,277. A compar-
ison of the rural colored population will
show that possibly over 60 per cent. of
the property accumulated by those who
were either trained in slavery or grew
up immediately after the war, so that
they received the beneficial effects of
the habits of industry in which their
race was at that time trained. It will
show in the next place that the pro-
portion of convicts in the State peni-
tentiaries in the Southern States from
the negroes is from 85 to 93 per cent.
of the total number of convicts con-
fined. In Louisiana the proportion is
85 per cent. of all State criminals. In
Alabama it is 85.4 per cent. In Florida
86.4 per cent. In Mississippi it is 91
per cent. In Georgia it is 90 per cent.
In the District of Columbia, where the
negroes are assumed to have had ex-
ceptional advantage and where possi-
bly a certain element of them are
as well off as anywhere in the coun-
try, they furnished, a year or two ago,
86 per cent. of the criminals. Of these
convicts, more than nine-tenths have
grown up since slavery was abolished.

The negroes, indeed, may be divided
into three classes.

The first is a small class, compara-
tively speaking, who are more or less
educated, some being well educated and
well conducted; others, with a sem-
blance of education and none too well
behaved. The former constitute what
may be termed the upper fraction; the
latter lack the essential element of
character and even moral perception.

The second class is composed of a
respectable, well-behaved, self-respect-
ing element; sensible, though with lit-
tle or no education, and, except when
under the domination of passion, good
citizens. This class embraces most of
the more intelligent of the older gen-
eration who were trained in slavery,
and a considerable element of the in-
telligent middle-aged, conservative
workers of the race who were trained
by this generation. The two together
may be called the backbone of the
race.

The third class is composed of those
who are wholly ignorant, or in whom,
though they have what they call edu-
cation, this so-called education is un-
accompanied by any of the fruits of
character which education is supposed
to produce. Among these are many
who esteem themselves in the first
class, and, because of a veneer of ed-
ucation, are not infrequently confound-
ed with them.

The two classes may easily be reck-
oned with. They contain the elements
which make good citizens and which
should enable them to secure all prop-
er recognition and respect. They need
no weapon but that which they pos-
sess—good citizenship.

Unfortunately, the great body of the
race, and a vast percentage of the
growing generation, belong to the third
class. It is this class which has to be
reckoned with.

It is like a vast sluggish mass of un-
cooled lava over a large section of the
country, burying some portions and af-
fecting the whole. It is apparently
harmless, but beneath its surface
smolder fires, which may at any time
burst forth unexpectedly and destroy
all within reach. It is this mass, in-
creasing from beneath, not from above,
which constitutes the negro question.

Unfortunately for the negro race, the
depressing view that the negro has re-
trograded since the war is borne out by
the increase of crime among them; by
the increase of superstition, with its
black trail of unnamable immorality
and vice; by the homicides and mur-
ders, and by the outbreak and growth
of the brutal crime which has chiefly
brought about the frightful crime of
lynching which stains the good name
of the South and has spread northward
with the spread of the negro ravisher.

It is a fact, which no one will deny,
that the crime of rape was substan-
tially unknown during the period of
slavery, and was hardly known during
the first years of freedom; it is the
fatal product of new conditions. Twen-
ty-five years ago women in the South
went unattended, with no more fear
of attack than they have in New En-
gland. To-day, no woman in the South
goes alone upon the highway out of
sight of white men, except on necessity
and no man leaves his women alone in
his house if he can help it. Over 500
white women and children have been
assaulted in the South by negroes with-
in that time.

This is a terrible showing, and the
most depressing part of it is the failure
of the negroes to address themselves
to the moral improvement of their
race.

None of this will affect the views of
the politician or the doctrinaire, but it
should, at least, give food for thought
among the rest of our people, that these
views are held almost universally by
the intelligent white people of the
South, irrespective of their different
political or religious views, irrespective
of their social or their business stand-
ing; and further, that, substantially,

these views are held by any outsiders
who go and see enough of the South
to secure opportunities for close and
general observation, and, precisely as
their experience is broad, and their
means of information extensive, their
views approximate those held by the
white residents.

Meantime, the negro has retrograd-
ed as a workman until he has not only
lost the field in which he once had no
rival, but is in danger of losing even

the ability to compete for its recov-
ery.

What is the situation now? The races
are more widely divided than ever be-
fore. White mechanics and negro me-
chanics no longer work together, gen-
erally, as of old. No contractor could
do now what the man who built "Bar-
ton Heights" did fifteen years ago.
The number of negro carpenters and
mechanics is greatly reduced, and the
writer is informed by intelligent ne-
groes that such work as they do is

mainly among their own people. The
causes are not far to seek. It is partly
due to a failure of ability in the negro,
to hold up his own in the struggle of
competition, and partly to the changed
relations between him and the white.
The old feeling of friendliness and
amity has waned, and in its room has
come a cold indifference, if not actual
hostility. The new negro has been
taught that he is the equal of the
white, and he is always asserting it and
trying to prove it by any way but the

right way—the equality of his work.