

RACE ISSUE IN SOUTH

NORTHERN MAN'S SENSIBLE OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEGRO QUESTION.

CAME SOUTH A REPUBLICAN

Quickly Learned, However, That the Democrats Were in the Right in Opposing Negro Domination.

Reading an editorial in the Philadelphia Press of the 11th instant, I concluded to do something I have been contemplating for some time, and do it at once—that is, write an article on the situation in the Carolinas from the standpoint of a Northern man, and one who for the past ten years has been a resident of the Carolinas, and is thoroughly acquainted with prominent people of both political parties, and also thoroughly acquainted with the status of the negro in politics, says John P. Coffin, of Danville, Va., in a letter to the Washington Post. I was born a Republican, being introduced to the world in Massachusetts in the first year of the Republican party's existence. I was a strong Republican as a boy, and reached a Republican manhood in the State of Kansas, which at that time—1875—was an almost unanimously Republican State. I was for many years publisher and editor of Republican papers, and would as soon have thought of selling by birth-right as of deserting the Republican party. This state of mind continued until ten years ago. I traveled through the Atlantic coast States and saw the condition of things politically. Soon after that time—in 1889—I settled at Florence, S. C., a section of the State where the races were very evenly divided, though the white man ruled. I saw then, and I still see, no way in which a self-respecting, educated, or intelligent white man can vote with the Republican party in the South, in local affairs. The few white leaders among the Republicans in the "Black Districts" are leaders simply for office, with no higher aim; no higher aspirations than the money they can make; the notoriety they can attain, and the petty power they can exercise.

For some weeks prior to the recent election I was in the several counties of Eastern North Carolina, and I can honestly say, in my opinion, that any man coming from the North, or elsewhere, who could see what I saw, and keep his Republican proclivities in local politics, is either a fool or a knave. There are many good men who are Republicans in the western portion of the Carolinas, but they have not been thrown into contact with the results as have those of the eastern portion of the State. This year, however, the condition had become so rotten that the stench from the eastern counties was wafted like a great miasmatic cloud over the western counties, rising from the borders of the ocean and ascending even to the clouds which cap the Blue Ridge, and a response came which swept the State of much of its disease. The people of the eastern counties did not desire trouble; they had nothing against the negro; they give him employment; they feed, they educate him, paying about 95 per cent. of the taxes; the whites build school houses and tax themselves to help him. What, then, is the cause of the great feeling of the recent election? The negro, in politics, is not a unit individually, but a unit collectively. The negro does not vote for principle or upon party issues, unless you call his principle the talismanic word Republican. For this word he will sell his best friend and benefactor; for this word he will place in office a drunken sot or a knave; for this word he will turn over to rotten officials the power to destroy the property of his employer and make it practically valueless. The negro knows no such word as gratitude when he is voting—some will say that it is in gratitude that he votes the Republican ticket, but it is not so. It is because he is petted, patted and cajoled by office-seekers, who are really his worst enemies.

There is another reason—he has had a taste of office-holding. Negroes who could not read or write have held seats in the Legislatures of both North and South Carolina in the past; they hold offices now for which they have no fitness, mentally or morally. Hundreds of them hold positions as magistrates in the eastern counties of North Carolina. The negro has not, nor ever will have, a judicial mind; it is not given him by nature; it is one great fault of his physical make-up, and why should he, because he is black, be put in a position for which nature never intended him? There has been too much talk through the press of all the faults of the negro—of his faults against the white race, due to his sensual nature; of the danger from him to be feared by respectable people, etc., etc. I did not begin this letter to discuss these questions, but I will simply pause to say that the negro of to-day is not the negro of thirty years ago. The old-time negro is honored and respected by his old-time masters, and need never suffer if they have bread, but the "new negro," the boy and the youth who have grown up in the streets of the rapidly-growing Southern towns, are to be watched and suppressed. It is the only hope of security, the only hope of civilization. Give the ordinary negro an "inch and he will take an ell." He has been so cajoled that he honestly thinks, at least many of them do, that they are superior to the white race. They have gotten in North Carolina so that they dictate to the Republican bosses, and that is the reason they have been given nearly all the local offices in the eastern part of the State, not because the leaders desired it, but because they were compelled to give it. The tool was rising up against the artisan, and with power to crush him.

The Press speaks of honest "election laws." The election laws of North Carolina have been so arranged that, with the machinery in their own hands, the Republican officers could illegally register enough negro votes to carry the State, and this without the power of the white man to challenge. By the present law all names must be challenged before the day of election, on specific days set apart for this purpose. The voter not being present, how can any one know from a name whether he is entitled to vote or not? There is no challenge allowed on election day. Thousands of negroes have been illegally registered, and this is why the white men—not alone the white Democrats—gave it out, as they did give it out, they would challenge this illegal vote with a rifle or shotgun on the day of election.

The feeling in the eastern part of the State, as I learned from a thorough study of it just before the election, was not against the negro as a negro. The most intense feeling was against the white "Fusionist," and the white Republican who had organized the negroes for the sole purpose of forwarding his own political ends. The fight was really against the debauched office-holder and his minions. The negro was a secondary consideration. If he came between the upper and the nether millstone he would be crushed; but aside from that he would be perfectly safe. There was a settled determination that the abominable conditions existing should come to an end, and they did, to a great extent. The day of negro domination of the eastern part of North Carolina has come to an end; the danger of negro domination in other sections of the State has come to an end; the day of the negro as a political weight to elevate unfit persons to office in the South has come to an end. With the negro vote entirely eliminated, the South could be split by the Republican party on legitimate issues. So long as Republicanism means negroism in the South, so long will the Anglo-Saxon race vote as a unit for men who are white and represent white men.

The Press says there was "no negro

domination." Perhaps not; but where, as in New Hanover County, where Wilmington is located, as well as other counties, out of forty magistrates thirty-six were negroes—where the deputy Sheriffs, coroners, policemen and all similar executive and judicial officers were negroes, while the whites paid 95 per cent. of the bills—if that is not negro domination I do not know what it means.

I wish to repeat that the whites have nothing against the negro as a negro. The whites of the South will do more for the negro than will the whites of the North. Any inferior race attempting to usurp the reins of power, and dominate and domineer over the Anglo-Saxon, has made a mistake. The negro has made this mistake, but he has made it, not of his own volition, but at the suggestion of white men, who have used him to carry their own ends, but the dam once broken, the originators of the break cannot control the stream.

The sooner the Republican party recognizes the fact that ignorance and color cannot rule—and ruin—the education and the Anglo-Saxon of the South, then and only then can it hope to break the "Solid South," for Northern men, Northern Republicans coming down here to live, only make it that much more solid; that much harder to break. I am not now a resident of either of the Carolinas, but I wanted to say this much in justification of the firm and determined stand the people of North Carolina have taken. They respect the negro who respects himself; they will aid and feed him; they will care for him when sick and educate him; they will do much for him; but let him put by his vote incompetence and dishonesty in office, they will not, nor should they.