

CLASSICS TO GO



**THE SOUL
OF JOHN BROWN**
STEPHEN GRAHAM

The Soul of John Brown

Stephen Graham

THOUGHTS ON SLAVERY

ALTHOUGH Charles Lynch of Virginia used to suspend British farmers by their thumbs until they cried out *Liberty for ever!* and lynching has continued ever since, America is nevertheless at bottom free, or at least was intended to be so by the idealists and politicians who brought her forth. America is a living reproof of Europe, and it has been generally conceived of as a land where men should suffer no encroachment upon their personal liberty, where they should reap duly the fruits of their labors, where no man should sap their rugged independence or infringe upon the sovereign equality of their social rights, where government should be entirely by consent of the governed, not handed down from above as from superior beings or masters, but controlled from below, from the broad base of toiling humanity.

The first discoverers were plunderers and seekers after barbaric gold and gems, but her real pioneers were God-fearing men who laid the foundations of modern American civilization by honest work and a boundless belief in the development of free democracy. The institution of slavery was therefore the thing which in theory was most abhorrent to the American mind. It is a curious anomaly that a very short while after the Declaration of Independence the land from which America separated became free of slavery, and the British flag pre-eminently the flag of freedom. But America, freed though she had become from political interference on the part of Britain, nevertheless inherited

Negro slavery; and the economic prosperity of at least one-half of the country was founded on the most hideous bondage in world history. Those who had fled Europe to escape tyrants had themselves, under force of circumstances, become tyrants.

Not that anyone willed slavery in America or designed to have it. It was an economic accident. It was in America before most of the Americans. The first Negro slaves were brought up the James River in Virginia before the *Mayflower* arrived, and as Negro orators say to-day, "If being a long while in this country makes a good American, we are the best Americans that there are." Slavery had grown to vast proportions by the time of the war against Britain. New America in 1783, standing on the threshold of the modern era, inherited a most terrible burden in her millions of slaves. It was a burden that was growing into the live flesh of America, and no one dared face at that time the problem of getting free of it.

The actual American people as a whole were little responsible for the institution of slavery. The pioneers hated and feared it. The planters always condemned it in theory, and after the Emancipation of 1863 no one of any sense in the South has ever wished it back. Even in those States where slavery took deepest root and showed its worst characteristics, there was throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a persistent resistance on the part of the colonists against having black servile labor introduced.

To cite one colony as in a way characteristic of the whole attitude of the colonists toward slavery, Georgia might be taken. Georgia was originally an asylum for the bad boys of too respectable British families and for discharged convicts and hopeless drunkards. Royal charter guaranteed freedom of religion (except to Papists); an embargo was placed on

West Indian trade, so as to stop the inflow of rum; and Negro slavery was forbidden. All for the good of reprobates making a fresh start!

Invalids and merchants settled on the coast and made the society of Savannah. The bad boys proved to be too poor stuff with which to found a colony, and a special body of a hundred and thirty frugal and industrious Scots and a hundred and seventy carefully chosen Germans were brought in. Real work in Georgia commenced at Ebenezer, on the Savannah River, and at New Inverness. The merchants strove to get slavery introduced; the Scots and the Germans strove to keep it out. At Savannah every night polite society toasted "*The One Thing Needful*"—Slavery. The common talk of the townfolk was of the extra prosperity that would come to Georgia if slaves were brought in, the extra quantities of cotton, of rice, of timber, and all that middlemen could re-sell. The ministers of religion actually preached in churches in favor of an institution sanctioned by the Bible, and it was thought that a service was done for Christ by bringing the black men out of Africa, where they were somewhat inaccessible, and throwing them into the bosom of the Christian family in America. But the Scots and the Germans remonstrated against the permission of an evil shocking to human nature and likely to prove in time not a blessing but a scourge.

Over in South Carolina slavery was in full possession, and the wealth of the Carolinian merchants was a soreness to the lean traders of Georgia. Cupidity prompted underhand means to achieve the desired end. Slaves were imported on life lease from owners in South Carolina. One could not purchase the freehold of a Negro's liberty and energy, only a ninety-nine years' lease of it, as it were, but that sufficed. Freedom fell, the charter was abrogated, and under the sway of a royal governor the floodgates of slavery were

opened wide. In due time Georgia became one of the worst slave States of the South. It remains to this day one of those where in any case the contemporary record of burning and lynching is most lurid. It would not be unsafe to draw the conclusion that the introduction of slavery did as much harm to the souls of the original Germans, Scots, and English and their descendants as to the Negroes themselves.

The settlers were, however, loath to employ slaves, and for some years there was little change. It was the rich immigrants from South Carolina and elsewhere who embarked on large enterprises of planting with a labor basis of black slaves. The poor white laboring class was gradually ruined by competition with slave labor. And then it became generally understood that everyone had to employ slaves, and it was unbecoming for a white man to toil with his hands. The poor Whites were if anything more despised than the black slaves, and often indeed actually despised, paradoxically enough, by the latter. In some parts there sprang up bands of white gypsies and robbers called "pinelanders," who stole from Black and White alike, and lived by their wits.

In Africa the Negro tribes strove with one another in savagery, and sold their prisoners to the Negro traders or White agents, who dragged them to the coast. There they were herded in the holds of noisome slaving vessels, indiscriminately, nakedly, fortuitously, the violent ones tied up or chained, the gentler ones unloosed. None knew whither they were going, and even those victorious tribes who sold them to the white man knew nothing of the destination of the victims they thus despatched. Hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of tribesmen of all kinds and shades of black and brown were thus exported to the Indies and the Colonies and sold into bondage to the civilized

world. Arrived in America, the slaves were sold to merchants or auctioned as common cattle and sent up country to work. A healthy male slave of good dimensions and in his prime would fetch a thousand dollars and young women eight hundred dollars, and fair-sized girls five hundred. Olmsted gives a price list which was handed him by a dealer; that was in 1853.^[1] In earlier years the price was considerably less, and always varied according to the demand. The raw, first-come Negro slaves were not sold as retinue for the rich, but as colonial utilities to be worked like cattle on the farms and plantations. Cotton was the staple, and in thinking of the time the eye must range over a vast expanse of cotton plantations and see all the main work done by Negro gangs of men and women in charge of slave drivers. As Olmsted describes a gang of women in a characteristic passage —“The overseer rode about them on a horse, carrying in his hand a rawhide whip ... but as often as he visited one end of the line the hands at the other end would discontinue their labor until he turned to them again. Clumsy, awkward, gross, elephantine in all their movements; pouting, grinning, and leering at us; sly, sensual, and shameless in all their expression and demeanor; I never before had witnessed, I thought, anything more revolting....” In 1837 the whole of Georgia, and indeed of the South, was worked by black slaves—the poor white labor (chiefly Irish) had diminished almost to disappearance. Slave labor was founded on slave discipline, and the discipline on punishment. There was no particular readiness on the part of the savages to do the work given them or understand what they had to do. Whether they could have been coaxed or persuaded is problematical. Farmers have not the time or the spirit for coaxing. The quickest way was by inspiring terror or inflicting pain. It might have been different if the Negro could have been given any positive incentive to work, but there was none. He had therefore to be flogged to it. The

smallest gang had its driver with his whip. The type who to-day has become politely a "speeder up" was then the man with the whip. He could have had more power by using his whip infrequently and on the most stubborn slaves, but that was not the common man's way. He flogged hard and he flogged often. On a typical Georgian plantation the field driver had power to inflict twelve lashes there and then when trouble occurred. The head driver could give thirty-six and the overseer fifty. Every morning there would be a dozen or so special floggings by the overseer or his assistant at the office. Women if anything fared worse than men. On the slightest provocation their scanty clothes were thrown over their heads and they were subjected to a beating. Naked boys and girls were tied by their wrists to boughs of trees so that their toes barely touched the ground, and lashed. The overseer did it, the owner's son did it, upon occasion the owner himself did it.

There were pleasant exceptional homes in Virginia and the Carolinas and elsewhere where there was no flogging and no cruelty whatsoever, but instead a great mutual affection. Slavery may have been wrong there also, or it may have been justifiable. But it was not on account of the happy slaves that John Brown sallied forth at Harper's Ferry, but because of the many unhappy ones. As the whole intensity of the Negro trouble is centered in the evils of the institution of slavery, it is necessarily on these that one must insist, though the exceptions be not lost sight of.

It is often said that the slaves were seldom hurt because, since they were property, it behooved a master to take care of them and preserve them. But that is fallacious. Men got pleasure out of beating their slaves as they get pleasure out of chewing tobacco, drinking spirits, and using bad language. It grew on them; they liked it more and more. In many cases no proficiency or industry could save the slaves

from a flogging. And, besides that, there was current in Georgia and all the more commercial parts a theory that it was most profitable to use up your slaves every seven years and then re-stock.

Slaves of course were bred, and it is conceivable that it might have been generally more profitable to have a breeding farm of Negroes and sell the children than work them off in seven years. But there was little method in the minds of the planters. They tried to combine the seven-years system and breeding at the same time. Every girl of sixteen had children, every woman of thirty had grandchildren. But the women were worked up to the last moment of pregnancy on the cotton fields and sent back three weeks after delivery, and even flogged then. The poor women lay on straw on earthen floors in their torments, moaning in their agonies. When sent back to the fields too soon they suffered horrible physical torment. They often appealed to their masters: "Me make plenty nigger for massa, me useful nigger." But more than half of their offspring were allowed to die. The mother would have been worth her keep as a mother, but, no, she must fill her place in the hoeing line instead of looking after her children.

There were few genuine Negro families. All were herded or separated and sold off in batches and re-herded with little or no regard to family relationships, though these poor, dark-minded slaves did form the most intimate and precious attachments. The slaves' fervent hope was that massa would marry and have children, so that when he died they would not be sold up, but remain in the family.

Illegitimacy in sexual relationships raged. Almost every planter had besides his own family a dusky brood of colored women. No likely girl escaped the overseers. Poor whites and pinelanders broke into black quarters and ravished

where they would. There seemed little squeamishness, and there was little enough effective resistance on the part of black girls. The institution of slavery with its cruelties had brutalized men's minds. As for the Negro women, one can well understand how little feminine shame would remain when the bare hips were so commonly exposed and flogged.

"Oh, but don't you know—did nobody ever tell or teach any of you that it is a sin to live with men who are not your husbands?" asked Fanny Kemble of a slave. The latter seized her vehemently by the wrist and exclaimed:

"Oh, yes, missie, we know—we know all about dat well enough; but we do anything to get our poor flesh some rest from the whip; when he make me follow him into de bush, what use me tell him no? He have strength to make me."^[2]

Probably the slave drivers and other white men obtained some sensual gratification from flogging women. Brutality of this kind is often associated with sexual perversity. The taking of Negro women showed a will toward the animal and was an act of greater depravity than ordinary deflections from the straight and moral way. Not that there was not pride in pale babies and even a readiness on the part of some Negresses to give themselves to white men. As a plantation song said: "Twenty-four black girls can't make one mulatto baby by themselves."

By flogging and rape and inhuman callousness did the white South express its reaction to black slavery. There were also burnings, demoniacal tortures, flogging to death, and every imaginable human horror. It may well be asked: *How came it about that those who protested so high-mindedly about the introduction of slavery did not use the slaves kindly and humanly when they were forced to have them?*

The answer I think lies in the fact that no man is good enough to have complete control over any other man. No man can be trusted. Give your best friend or neighbor power over you, and you'll be surprised at the use he will make of it. Even wives and children in this respect are not safe in the hands of their husbands and parents if they are understood as possessions. "She belongs to me and I'll kill her," Gorky makes a drunken cobbler say. "Ah, no, she does not belong to you; she is a woman, and a woman belongs to God," says the Russian friend.

There is indeed little more terrifying in human experience than the situation which occurs when one human being is entirely in the power of another, when the prisoner in the dungeon confronts his torturer, when the unprotected girl falls completely into the power of a man, when Shylock has Antonio delivered to him, and so forth.

Cruelty can be awakened in almost any man and woman—it can be developed. A taste for cruelty is like a taste for drink or sexual desire or drugs. It is a lust. It is indeed one of the worst of the lusts. One can forgive or excuse a man the other lusts, but cruelty one cannot—and indeed does not wish to forgive or excuse. Yet how readily does it develop.

The incredible story is told of a young girl lashed by the overseer, threatened with burning. She runs away. It is a gala day on the plantation. The white men hunt her to the swamps with bloodhounds and she is torn to bits before their eyes. They love the spectacle of terror even more than the spectacle of pain. The Negro, of nervous, excitable nature, is marked out by destiny to be a butt for cruelty. It is so to-day, long after emancipation; the Negro, in whom hysterical fear can be awakened, is the most likely to be lynched or chased by the mob or slowly burned for its delight. More terrible than the act of cruelty is the state of

mind of those who can look on at it and gloat over it. After all, a lynching is often roughly excusable. A man commits a heinous crime against a woman, scandalizing the community, and the community takes the law into its own hands. The rightness of the action can be argued. But what of the state of heart of a mob of a thousand, watching a Negro burning to death, listening happily to his yells and crying out to "make him die slow"? It is an appalling revelation of the devil in man.

And despite the fact that such cruelty agonizes the mind of the tender-hearted and sympathetic, we must remain tolerant in judgment. We must not tolerate intolerance; in all other respects we must be tolerant.

Cruelty is in man. The planters did the natural thing with the slaves who came into their power. The white South would slip into the same way of life again to-day if slavery could be introduced. What is more, you and I, and every man, unless he were of an exceptional nature, would succumb to the system and disgrace ourselves with similar cruelty. A demon not altogether banished still lurks in most of us and can easily be brought back. Lust lives on lust and grows stronger; and cruelty, like other cravings, is a desire of the flesh, and can easily become devouring habit. We are greater brutes after we have committed an act of cruelty or lust than we were before we committed it, and we are made ready to commit more or worse.

Concomitant with cruelty is callousness. An indifference which is less than usual human carelessness sets in with regard to creatures on whom we have satisfied our lusts. Flogging makes a heavy flogged type of human being who looks as if he had always needed flogging. It ceases to be piquant to flog him. The old Negress with brutish human lusts written all over her body is not even horrible or

repulsive, *elle n'existe plus*. The old, worn-out drudge lies down to die in the dirty straw, the flies gathering about his mouth, and expires without one Christian solace or one Christian sympathy. Though ministers waxed eloquent on the Christian advantages to the Blacks of being brought from pagan Africa to Christian America, there quickly sets in the belief that after all Negroes are like animals and have no souls to save.

This callousness showed worst in the selling of slaves, the separating of black husband and wife, parents and children, family and family, with the indifference with which a herdsman separates and detaches sheep from his flock. This, despite the manifest passionate tenderness and attachment of slave to slave, and even upon occasion slave to master and home.

The state of the slaves grew most forlorn, forsaken of man, unknown to God. A prison twilight eclipsed the light of the sun-flooded Southland. A consciousness of a sad, sad fate was begotten among the slaves. All the tribes of the Negroes became one in a community of suffering. And gradually they ceased to be mere savages. They grew to something higher—through suffering. It was a penal offense for many a long year even to preach Christ to them. Slaves were beaten when it was found out that they had been baptized. But before the Blacks were brought to Christ they must have got a great deal nearer Him than had their masters. It was illegal to teach a slave to read and write. But the Negroes in a mysterious way learned the white man's code and secretly obtained his Bible and plunged into the Old Testament and the New. The white man rightly feared that the spread of education among the slaves would endanger the institution. They spoke of slavery as *the* institution as if it were the only one in the world. They also feared the spread of Christian teaching.

As it happened, the Negro soul was very thirsty for religion and drank very deeply of the wells of God. The Negroes learned to sing together, thus first of all expressing corporate life. They drew from the story of Israel's sufferings a token of their own life, and they formed their scarcely articulate hymns—which survive to-day as the only folklore music of America.

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egyp' lan'.
Tell ole Pharaoh
Le' ma people go!

Israel was in Egyp' lan',
Oppres' so hard dey could not stan'.
Le' ma people go!

or the infinitely pathetic and beautiful

In the valley
On my knees
With my burden
An' my Saviour

I couldn't hear nobody pray, O Lord,
Couldn't hear nobody pray.
O—way down yonder
By myself
I couldn't hear nobody pray.

Chilly waters
In the Jordan,
Crossing over
Into Canaan,

I couldn't hear nobody pray, O Lord,
Couldn't hear nobody pray.
O—way down yonder by myself
I couldn't hear nobody pray.

Hallelujah!
Troubles over
In the Kingdom
With my Jesus.

I couldn't hear nobody pray, O Lord,
Couldn't hear nobody pray.
O—way down yonder
By myself
I couldn't hear nobody pray.

The poor slave was very much—way down yonder by himself, and he couldn't hear nobody pray. Jesus seemed to have been specially born for him—to love his soul when none other was ready to love it, to comfort him in all his sufferings, and to promise him that happy heaven where unabashed the old woolly-head can sit by Mary and “play with the darling Son,” as another “spiritual” expresses it.

The first Negro preachers and evangelists had the inevitable persecution, and as inevitably the persecution failed. The North grew very sympathetic, and Bibles grew as plentiful in the South as dandelion blossoms. It became the unique lesson book of the Negro. It alone fed his spiritual consciousness. He obtained at once an appreciation of its worth to him that made it his greatest treasure, his only offset against his bondage. He learned it by heart, and there came to be a greater textual knowledge of the Bible among the Black masses than among any other people in the world. It is so to-day, though it is fading. The spiritual life of the Negro became as it were an answering beacon to the fervor of the Abolitionists of the North, most of whom were passionate Christians of Puritan type.

The South grew sulky, grew infinitely suspicious and restive, and irritated and fearful. It began to fear a general slaves' rising. The numerical superiority of the Negroes presented itself to the mind as an ever-growing menace. The idea of emancipation was fraught with the economic ruin it implied. It is difficult now to resurrect the mind of society preceding the time of the great Civil War. It is the fashion to emphasize the technical aspect of the quarrel of North and South, and

to say that the war was fought in order that the Union might be preserved. But it is truer to say that it was fought because the South wanted to secede. And the South wished to secede because it saw more clearly every day that the institution of slavery was in danger. Every month, every year, saw its special occasions of irritation, premonitory splashing out of flame, petty explosions and threats. More slaves escaped every year. The Underground Railway, so called, by which the Friends succored the poor runaways and brought them out of danger and distress into the sanctuary of the North grew to be better and better organized. On the other hand, the punishments of discovered runaways grew more barbarous and more public, and the rage of the North was inflamed.

Heroic John Brown made his abortive bid to light up a slaves' insurrection by his wild exploit of Harper's Ferry. And then John Brown, old man as he was, of apostolic aspect and fervor, was tried and condemned. He did not fear to die. But he wrote to his children that they should "abhor *with undying hatred* that sum of all villainies, slavery," and while he was being led to the gallows he handed to a bystander his last words and testament—

I, John Brown, am now quite *certain* that the crimes of this *guilty land* will never be purged away but with blood. I had *as I now think vainly* flattered myself that without *very much* bloodshed it might be done....

And in his ill-fitting suit and trousers and loose carpet slippers John Brown was hanged silently and solemnly, and all the troops watching him, even stern Stonewall Jackson himself, were stricken with a sort of premonitory terror. Soon came the great war.

And the slaves were made free. That is their story. Where do they stand to-day?

II

IN VIRGINIA

By the abolition of slavery mankind threw off a great evil. The slave owner escaped as well as the slave. For, although our human sympathy goes more readily to the slaves themselves, it is nevertheless true that it was as bad for the spirit and character of the owners as for those of their chattels. To-day in America, and especially in the South, there is a hereditary taint in the mind derived from slavery and it is to be observed in the descendants of the masters as much as in the descendants of the slaves. It would be a mistake to think of this American problem as exclusively a Negro problem. It is as necessary to study the white people as the black. The children of the owners and the overseers and the slave drivers are not the same as the children of families where no slaves were ever owned. Mastery of men and power over men have been bred in their blood. That in part explains the character of that section of the United States where slaves were most owned, and the brutality, cruelty, and sensuality which upon occasion disfigure the face of society in 1920. The old dead self leers out with strange visage from the new self, which wishes to be different.

If you see a white man in New Orleans rolling his quid and spitting out foul brutality against "niggers," you will often find that his father was a driver on a plantation. Or if in that abnormal way so characteristic of the South you hear foul sexual talk about the Negroes rolling forth from a lowbrow in Vicksburg, it is fairly likely that he is full of strange black lust

himself, and that his father and grandfather perchance assaulted promiscuously Negro women and contributed to the writing of racial shame in the vast bastardy of the South. If you hear a man urging that the Negro is not a human being, but an animal, you will often find that he himself is nearer to the animal. His fathers before him held that the Negroes were animals and not humans. And, believing them animals, they yet sinned with the animals, and so brought themselves down to animal level. You see a crowd of white men near Savannah. They are mostly proud of their English origin. Yet they are going to burn a Negro alive for killing a sheriff. How is it possible in this century? It is possible because it is in the blood of the children. They crave to see Uncle Tom's flesh crackling in the flames and hear his hysterical howls. Their fathers did. Their children's children will do the same unless it is stamped out by the will of society as a whole.

Of course the inheritance of evil is not the same in all classes of society. Everyone inherits something from the baleful institution, but not everyone the same. The mind of the coarse White is crude and terrible, and the mind of the refined is certainly different. One should perhaps be more lenient to the poor, and more urgent in criticism of the rich. For all stand together, and the disease is one not merely of individuals, but of the whole. The rich and cultured condone the brutality of the masses because they have a point of view which is incompatible with theirs.

Those whose ancestors treated the slaves well, claim to be immune from all criticism. There were in the old days many kind and considerate masters to whom the Negroes were wonderfully attached. But even these masters suffered from the institution of slavery, as any rich man suffers from dependence on retainers and flunkeys and servants whom he practically owns, as all suffer who are divorced from the

reality of earning their living as equals with their neighbors. And their children, brought up amidst the submissive servility of the Negroes, grew to be little monarchs or chiefs, and always to expect other people to do things for them. Where ordinary white children learn to ask and say "please," they learned to order and command and to threaten with punishment. The firm lip of the educated Southerner has an expression which is entirely military. In the army, one asks for nothing of inferiors except courage on the day of battle. All is ordered. And the power to order and to be obeyed rapidly changes the expression of the features. It has changed the physiognomy of the aristocracy in the Southern section of the United States. You can classify all faces into those who say "please" and those who do not, and the children of the slave owners are mostly in the second category. Unqualified mastership; indifference to dirt and misery in the servant class; callous disregard of others' pain, or pleasure taken in their pain; slaves said to be animals and not human beings, and the superadded sin of bestiality, using a lower caste to satiate coarse lusts which the upper caste could not satisfy; the buying and selling of creatures who could otherwise only belong to God—all these terrible sins or sinful conditions are visited on the third and fourth generation of those who hate, though as must always be said, God's mercy is shown to thousands of them that love Him and keep His eternal commandments.

The children of the slaves also inherit evil from their slavery. The worst of these are resentment and a desire for revenge. Doubtless, slavery sensualized the Negro. He was the passive receptacle for the white man's lusts. Most of the Negroes arrived in America more morally pure than they are to-day. As savages, they were nearer to nature. Mentally and spiritually they are much higher now, but they have learned more about sin, and sin is written in most of their bodies. It is sharpest in the mulattoes and "near whites"—

those whose ancestors were longest in slavery have the worst marks of it in them. The state of the last slaves to be imported into America is much simpler and happier than the rest. The moral character of the black Negroes is also simpler than that of the pallid ones. But this is anticipating my story. I set off to study the ex-slave because the civilized world is threatened by what may be called a vast slaves' war. In Russia the grandchildren of the serfs have overthrown those who were once their masters, and have taken possession of the land and the state; in Germany Spartacus has arisen to overthrow the military slavery of Prussianism; and the wage slaves are rising in every land. There is a vast resentment of lower orders against upper orders, of the proletarians, who have nothing and are nothing, against those who through inheritance or achievement have reached the ruling class. The Negroes are in no way to be compared to the Russians in intellectual or spiritual capacity: they are racially so much more undeveloped. Much less divided Russian serf from Russian master than slave from planter. But it is just because the contrast between the American white man and American black man is so sharp and the quarrel so elemental in character that it has seemed worth while to explore the American situation. And if the struggle is more elemental, it can hardly be said that there is not more at stake. American industrialism is ravaged by waves of violent revolutionary ferment. If ill-treatment of the Blacks should at last force the twelve millions of them to make common cause with a revolutionary mob, polite America might be overwhelmed and the larger portion of the world be lost—if not of the world, at least of that world we call civilization.

What, then, of the Negro? What is he doing, what does he look like, what does he feel to-day? It is impossible to learn much from current books, so, following the dictum: "What is

remarkable, learn to look at it with your own eyes," I went to America to see.

I chose Olmsted as my model. In 1853 Olmsted made a famous journey through the seaboard States, holding up his mirror to the life of the South in slavery days. The book which records his impressions and reflections is one of the most valuable in American literature. This great student of nature went methodically through Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia, Alabama and Louisiana. A pilgrimage not unlike his has to be repeated to-day to ascertain how the ex-slave is, what he is doing, how the experiment of his liberation has prospered, and what is his future in the American Commonwealth. But as America is so much more developed in 1920, and more problematical in the varied fields of her national life, it has been necessary to make a broader, if more rapid, survey of the whole South. I made the following journey in America: I went slowly south from New York to Trenton, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, staying some days at each and seeing America grow darker as it visibly does when you watch faces from trolley car windows going from town to town southward. I was on South Street, in Philadelphia; watched the well-paid artisans and laborers at the docks of Baltimore, visited there the polite homes of the colored working class, cleaner, richer, cozier than that of the average British workman on Tyneside or London Docks. I climbed the Lincoln Heights to talk to Nanny Burroughs and see her good training college for colored women there; was at Howard University and talked with black and gentle Professor Miller and with the pale and intellectual Emmett Scott. I sailed down the Potomac to Norfolk, Virginia, Uncle Sam's great naval base, going to be the greatest of its kind in the world; crossed to Newport News and talked with black riveters and chippers and others in the shipbuilding yards; then, following the way of the first English colonists and also the first Negro slaves,

went up the James River to Jamestown, and on to Richmond, the fine capital of the Old Dominion. I traveled to Lynchburg and its tobacco industries, went from thence to “sober” Knoxville, investigating the race riot there and the attitude of Tennessee. From Knoxville I went to Chattanooga and Birmingham, in each of which great steel centers I met the leading Negroes and investigated conditions. I was at Atlanta, and walked across Georgia to the sea, following Sherman. A three-hundred-mile walk through the cotton fields and forests of Georgia was necessary in order to get a broad section of the mass of the people. The impression left behind by Sherman’s army which laid waste the country and freed all the Negroes there gave also something of the historical atmosphere of the South. From Savannah, which was the point on the sea to which General Sherman attained, I went to Brunswick and Jacksonville, thence to Pensacola, and on from Florida to New Orleans and the Gulf plantations. I journeyed up the Mississippi on a river steamer, stayed at the Negro city of Mound Bayou, was at Vicksburg and Greenville and Memphis, and then repaired once more to the contrasting North.

Crossing the Mason-Dixon line was rather a magical and wonderful event for me. After all, the North, with its mighty cities and industrialized populations, is merely prose to one who comes from England. Pennsylvania is a projection of Lancashire and Yorkshire, New York is a projection of London, and massive Washington has something of the oppressiveness of English park drives and Wellingtonias. But southward one divines another and a better country. It has a glamour; it lures. There the orange grows and there are palms; there is a hotter sun and brighter flowers. Human beings there, one surmises, have a more romantic disposition and warmer imagination. Reposing on the vast feudalism of Negro labor there is a more stately way of living, life is more spacious. And at the resorts on the coast

of Florida and the Gulf of Mexico a great number of people live for pleasure and happiness, and not for business and ambition.

I journeyed on a white-painted steamer in the evening down the Potomac to Old Point Comfort, leaving behind me the noise and glare of Washington and the hustle of Northern American civilization. It was the crossing of a frontier—without show of passports or examination of trunks, the passing to a new country, with a different language and different ways. The utter silence of the river was a great contrast to the clangor of the streets of Philadelphia and Baltimore and the string of towns I had been passing through on my way South. Sunset was reflected deep in the stream, and mists crept over the surface of the water. Then the moon silvered down on our course, my cabin window was full open and the moon looked in. I lay in a capacious sort of cottage bed and was enchanted by the idea of going to “Dixie,” of which we had all sung so much; and the soft Southern airs and night and the throbbing of the river steamer gliding over the placid water gave an assurance of some new refreshment of spirit. With a quaint irrelevance the whole British army, and indeed the nation, had been singing “Dixie” songs throughout the war—“Just try to picture me, way down in Tennessee” we were always asking of one another. Now, behold, the war was over, and it might be possible to go there and forget a little about all that sordid and tumultuous European quarrel.

All night the river whispered its name and lulled the boat to sleep. Dawn on the broad serenity of the waters at Old Point Comfort was utterly unlike the North, from which I had come, and the last ten days of jangling trolley cars hustling along shabby streets. A morning star shone in the pale-blue sky, lighting as it were a vestal lamp over the coast, and we looked upon Virginia. As the sun rose, vapor closed in the

scene. We made the port of Norfolk in a mist which seemed each moment getting warmer. The chill winds of October were due in the North, but Virginia was immune. During the week I spent in the city of Norfolk and on Hampton Roads it did not get less than 85 in the shade, even at night. The weather, however, was hotter than is usual even in Eastern Virginia at that time of the year.

I obtained the impression of a great city rather cramped for want of space, and in this I suppose I was right. By all accounts Norfolk has trebled its population during the war, and needs to have its center rebuilt spaciously and worthily. When Olmsted came through in 1853 he records that Norfolk was a dirty, low, ill-arranged town, having no lyceum or public library, no gardens, no art galleries, and though possessing two "Bethels" having no "Seamen's Home" and no place of healthy amusement. He rather makes fun of a Lieutenant Maury, who in those days was having a vision of the Norfolk of the future, and saw it one of the greatest ports in the world, being midmost point of the Atlantic coast and having an inner and an outer harbor with perfect facilities of ingress and egress in all weathers.

To-day Lieutenant Maury's vision has proved prophetic. In the maps of the new America which is coming, Norfolk is destined to be printed in ever larger letters. The war showed the way. The determination of America to be worthily armed at sea made it certain, and the future of Norfolk, with Hampton Roads and Newport News, is to be the primary naval base of the Atlantic coast. The military and naval activities of Norfolk during the war were very important. Eastern Virginia was a great training ground, and Norfolk the main port of embarkation of troops for Europe. Shipbuilding and naval construction also were in full swing. Great numbers of laborers, especially Negroes, seem to have been attracted. The number no doubt is exaggerated, but the

colored people there number themselves now at one hundred thousand. They have been attracted by the high wages and the record of Norfolk for immunity from mob violence. A lynching is not in anyone's remembrance. Trouble might have broken out during the war, but Norfolk possessed an excellent "City Manager" who was always prepared.

On one occasion some five hundred sailors set out to "clean up colored town," but they were met by an adequate force of armed police and marines and changed their minds. On the other hand, a mob of colored crews and troops started an attack on the town jail, but a few armed men quickly dispersed them.

I noticed at once that the Blacks of Norfolk were very much more black than those of Washington or New York. Their hair was more matted. Their eyes were more goggly. They were more odorous. When the black chambermaid had been in my room for two minutes it was filled with a pungent and sickening odor. The elevator reeked with this odor. It was the characteristic smell of my first Southern hotel. I noticed it on the trolley cars. It was wafted among the vegetables and fruit of the city market. Indeed, the whole town had it. I grew used to it after a while and was told by those who were liberal of mind that every race had its smell. For instance, to certain tribes of Indians there was said to be nothing so disgusting as the smell of a perfectly clean white man. Even when a man who has a bath every day and a change into perfectly fresh linen came into his presence, the Indian felt sick. Negroes were supposed to notice the smell of white men, but were too subservient or polite to remark upon it. There is, however, a good deal of doubt about this point in human natural history. The smell that we have is the smell of the animal in us, and not of the more human or spiritual part of us. One knows the smell of the bear and the fox, and