

The Menace of Negro Suffrage

p. 65 "The counties of western North Carolina," as Governor Aycock said, "gave up their much-loved right of local government in order to relieve their brethren of the east from the intolerable burden of negro government."

p 68 "We have had but two periods of Republican rule in North Carolina — from 1868 to 1870, and from 1896 to 1898. That party contains a large number of respectable white men, but the negro constitutes two thirds of its voting strength. Government can never be better nor wiser than the average of the virtue and intelligence of the party that governs. The Republicans insist that we have never had negro rule in North Carolina; that the Republican party elects white men to office, and that this fact gives us a government of white men. Governor Russell, in his message to the last Legislature, vindicates himself against the charge of appointing negroes to office, and proudly boasts that out of 818 appointments made by him, not more than eight were negroes. He misses the point which we made, and make, against his party; it is not alone that Governor Russell put eight negroes in office, and his party a thousand more, but that the 125,000 negroes put him in office over the votes of the white men—it is the party behind the officeholder that governs, and not the officeholder himself. There is no man in the State to-day more certainly conscious than Governor Russell that he has failed of his purpose because he had behind him the negroes of the State, and not the white men. We had a white man for governor in 1870, when counties were declared in a state of insurrection; when innocent men were arrested without warrant by military cutthroats; when the writ of habeas corpus was suspended and the judiciary was exhausted. We had a white man for governor in 1898, when negroes became intolerably insolent; when ladies were insulted on the public streets; when burglary in our chief city became an every-night occurrence; when 'sleep lay down armed and the villainous centre-bits ground on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights'; when more guns and pistols were sold in the State than had been in the twenty preceding years; when . . . the Governor and our two Senators were afraid to speak in a city of 25,000 inhabitants. It is the negro behind the officer, and not the officer only, that constitutes negro government."

The Suffrage Campaign Of 1900

p 81 "This amendment was drawn with great skill. It was drawn after long thought, and with full knowledge of the end to be attained. It was drawn with the deliberate purpose of depriving the negro of the right to vote, and of allowing every white man to retain that right. And I tell you now and here, did I believe that it would cause the oppression of a single man, or deprive one white man, however ignorant or humble, of his suffrage, I would not support it. On the contrary its passage will mean peace to the land, it will mean an end to an era of crime and lawlessness, security to property and purity of politics. There will be no more dead negroes on the streets of Wilmington, no more rule of the incompetent and corrupt."

p 82 "I do not believe the Fusionists intended to give us bad government; they simply could not help it. I assert that such a condition with them is inevitable because the party has not behind it virtue and intelligence, but it has the evil influence of 120,000 negro voters. No government can be better or wiser than the average of the virtue and intelligence of the party that governs."

p 82 "May the era of good feeling among us be the outcome of this contest. Then we shall learn, if we do not already know, that while universal suffrage is a failure, universal justice is the perpetual decree of Almighty God, and that we are entrusted with power not for our good alone, but for the negro as well. We hold our title to power by the tenure of service to God, and if we fail to administer equal and exact justice to the negro whom we deprive of suffrage, we shall in the fulness of time lose power ourselves, for we must know that the God who is Love trusts no people with authority for the purpose of enabling them to do injustice to the weak."

p 83 "It is admitted that an educational qualification may be required. What sort of education? Does this necessarily mean book-learning, ability to read and write, or does it go further and extend to that education tendency, instinct, whatever you may call it, which we get from our fathers and mothers by inheritance as applied to government, that facility for understanding public questions which has characterized the white man for ages? Does any human being doubt that the English barons, who wrested Magna Carta from King John at Runnymede, were more capable of self-government than any equal number of uneducated negroes that ever lived on the globe? Not one of those glorious old heroes of liberty could write his name—indeed, they had great contempt for any person other than a clergyman who could do so. . . . Those who have experienced the suffrage for a long time and their descendants possess an education in government certainly as great as those who can merely read and write."

p 84 "We recognize and provide, for the God-given and hereditary superiority of the white man and of all white children now thirteen years of age, but for the future as to all under thirteen we call on them to assert that superiority of which we boast by learning to read and write. The schools are open and will be for four or more months every year from now to 1908. The white child under thirteen who will not learn to read and write in the next eight years will be without excuse."

A Progressive Administration

p 101 "It ought not to be necessary," said he to the Legislature, "for the Governor of your State to have to accompany his requisition with an assurance that the prisoner will not be lynched. Our character as a law-abiding people . . . ought to be such as to furnish a guarantee everywhere of a fair trial for any prisoner for whom requisition is asked . . . I cannot too strongly urge on your Honorable Body the duty of devising some means for the efficient, certain and speedy trial of crimes, and at the same time to make such provision as will protect every citizen, however humble, however vicious, however guilty, against trial by the mob."

"The best way to safeguard society is for good people themselves to obey the law. We cannot stop crime by committing it; we cannot teach obedience to the law by disobeying it; we cannot preserve order by the means of a mob. . . . The creating of better public opinion, the passage of laws making more effective the means of ascertaining and punishing all those participating in lynching, speedy trial and prompt punishment of criminals, shall all be invoked until we secure for ourselves the absolute and unquestioned reign of the law."

The Education Governor

p 132 "I am perfectly aware that there are men, good men, and many of them, who think that the experiment of educating the negro has been a failure. ... I find in the State men who think that the negro has gone backward rather than forward and that education is injurious to him. Have these men forgotten that the negro was well educated before the war? Do they not recall that he was trained in those things essential for his life work? He has been less educated since the war than before. It is true that he has been sent to school, but his contact with the old planter and with the accomplished and elegant wife of that planter has been broken. This contact was in itself a better education than he can receive from the public schools, but shall we, for this reason, say that he is incapable of training? Ought we not, on the contrary, to study the conditions and realize that the training which he needs has not been given to him since the war in like manner that it was before?"

p 135 "It seems to me that this opinion is right, and if it is, the proposed amendment would be declared unconstitutional, and the Suffrage Amendment which we have adopted, and which promises so much to the State, would undoubtedly follow in its wake. The strength of our present amendment lies in the fact that after 1908 it provides an educational qualification, and the courts will go far toward sustaining a provision of this nature when the State is endeavoring to educate all her children, but if it should be made to appear to the Court that in connection with our disfranchisement of the negro we had taken pains for providing to keep him in ignorance, then both amendments would fall together.

"The amendment proposed is unjust, unwise and unconstitutional. It would wrong both races, would bring our State into the condemnation of a just opinion elsewhere, and would mark us as a people who have turned backward. . . . Let us not seek to be the first State in the Union to make the weak man helpless. This would be a leadership that would bring us no honor but much shame. . . . Let us be done with this question, for while we discuss it the white children of the State are growing up in ignorance."

Aycock The Southerner— **His Attitude Toward The Negro And Toward Sectional Issues**

p 160 "He breathes the atmosphere of the cloister. He does not know men. Even in history, his specialty, they are dim forms playing on an ideal stage and not men of blood and passions. He does not understand his people. He sees in the race antagonism nothing but political passion. He has not read aright the great unconquerable race instinct. Politics did not make it, politics merely seized it for its purpose. I am bound to admit my surprise at his real ignorance of the depth, the strength, and the righteousness of the white man's attitude toward the negro. Probably if he would read King Edward's speech to Parliament he would not regard his own folks so lightly and hold their views in such contempt. In substance King Edward says in reference to South Africa, 'My policy toward South Africa shall be one of equality for whites and justice to the blacks.' A superior race can occupy no other attitude."

p 161 "These are some of the reasons for my being proud of North Carolina. I am proud of my State, moreover, because there we have solved the negro problem which recently seems to have given you some trouble. We have taken him out of politics and have thereby secured good government under any party and laid foundations for the future development of both races. We have secured peace, and rendered prosperity a certainty.

"I am inclined to give to you our solution of this problem. It is, first, as far as possible under the Fifteenth Amendment to disfranchise him; after that let him alone, quit writing about him; quit talking about him, quit making him 'the white man's burden,' let him 'tote his own skillet'; quit coddling him, let him learn that no man, no race, ever got anything worth the having that he did not himself earn; that character is the outcome of sacrifice and worth is the result of toil; that whatever his future may be, the present has in it for him nothing that is not the product of industry, thrift, obedience to law, and uprightness; that he can- not, by resolution of council or league, accomplish anything; that he can do much by work; that violence may gratify his passions but it cannot accomplish his ambitions; that he may eat rarely of the cooking of equality, but he will always find when he does that 'there is death in the pot.' Let the negro learn once for all that there is unending separation of the races, that the two peoples may develop side by side to the fullest but that they cannot intermingle; let the white man determine that no man shall by act or thought or speech cross this line, and the race problem will be at an end.

"These things are not said in enmity to the negro but in regard for him. He constitutes one third of the population of my State: he has always been my personal friend; as a lawyer I have often defended him, and as Governor I have frequently protected him. But there flows in my veins the blood of the dominant race; that race that has conquered the earth and seeks out the mysteries of the heights and depths. If manifest destiny leads to the seizure of Panama, it is certain that it likewise leads to the dominance of the Caucasian. When the negro recognizes this fact we shall have peace and good will between the races."

"But I would not have the white people forget their duty to the negro. We must seek the truth and pursue it. We owe an obligation to 'the man in black'; we brought him here; he served us well; he is patient and teachable. We owe him gratitude; above all we owe him justice. We cannot forget his fidelity and we ought not to magnify his faults; we cannot change his color, neither can we ignore his service. No individual ever 'rose on stepping stones of dead' others 'to higher things,' and no people can. We must rise by ourselves, we must execute judgment in righteousness; we must educate not only ourselves but see to it that the negro has an opportunity for education. "As a white man I am afraid of but one thing for my race and that is that we shall become afraid to give the negro a fair chance. The first duty of every man is to develop himself to the uttermost and the only limitation upon his duty is that he shall take pains to see that in his own development he does no injustice to those beneath him. This is true of races as well as of individuals. Considered properly it is not a limitation but a condition of development. The white man in the South can never attain to his fullest growth until he does absolute justice to the negro race. If he is doing that now, it is well for him. If he is not doing it, he must seek to know the ways of truth and pursue them. My own opinion is, that so far we have done well, and that the future holds no menace for us if we do the duty which lies next to us, training, developing the coming generation, so that the problems which seem difficult to us shall be easy to them."

The Keynote Of The Amendment Campaign
(Address Accepting The Democratic Nomination For Governor, April 11, 1900.)

p 223 "The man who seeks in the face of these provisions to encourage illiteracy is a public enemy and deserves the contempt of all mankind. . . . Gentlemen of the convention, this clause of our Amendment does not weaken but strengthens it. In your speeches to the people, in your talks with them on the streets and farms and by the firesides, do not hesitate to discuss this section. . . . Speak the truth, 'tell it in Gath, publish it in the streets of Askalon' that universal education of the white children of North Carolina will send us forward with a bound in the race with the world. . .

. With the adoption of our Amendment after 1908 there will be no State in the Union with a larger percentage of boys and girls who can read and write and no State will rush forward with more celerity or certainty than conservative old North Carolina. The miserable demagogue who seeks to perpetuate illiteracy in the State will then have happily passed forever. There is one other provision of the Amendment to which I must advert and that is the payment of the poll tax by March 1st of election years as a condition to voting. The largest part of the poll tax goes to public education under the Constitution. If our boys are to be educated as a condition precedent to voting after 1908, then no man who will not contribute to that end ought to vote. Nearly all white persons liable to poll tax pay it now. If the negro wants to vote it is no hardship on him that he should be required to pay his tax to the support of these schools in which his race gets more than it pays of the public fund. The various provisions of the Amendment work together for good to all men. We are going to carry them through to success. The fight is on. We unfurl anew the old banner of Democracy. We inscribe thereon "White Supremacy and Its Perpetuation."

The Ideals Of A New Era
(Inaugural Address As Governor Of North Carolina, January 15, 1901.)

p 243 "The white people owe a high duty to the negro. It was necessary to the safety of the State to base suffrage on capacity to exercise it wisely. This results in excluding a great number of negroes from the ballot, but their right to life, liberty, property and justice must be even more carefully safeguarded than ever. It is true that a superior race cannot submit to the rule of a weaker race without injury; it is also true in the long years of God that the strong cannot oppress the weak without destruction."

In Defence Of His Policies And His Administration
(From Address Before The Democratic State Convention At Greensboro, June 23, 1904.)

p 257 "The adoption of the Amendment was a cause of great anxiety to our colored citizens. Their disfranchisement was to them a matter of grievous import, which made them feel that they were something less than citizens and in a large measure cut them off from hope. I, in common with most of the thoughtful citizens of the State, realized this feeling of theirs. We had made the fight for the Amendment in no enmity to the negro, but for the sake of good government, peace and prosperity. When the fight had been won, I felt that the time had come when the negro should be taught to realize that while he would not be permitted to govern the State, his rights should be held the more sacred by reason of his weakness. I knew that our own passions had been aroused and that we were in danger of going too far. I realized to the fullest the peril of antagonizing the dominant and prevailing thought in the State, and yet I believed that the people who had chosen me Governor did so in the hope that I would be brave enough to sacrifice my own popularity — my future if need be—to the speaking of the rightful word and the doing of the generous act. I have therefore everywhere maintained the duty of the State to educate the negro. I have proclaimed this doctrine in many places and in doing so I have frequently met the condemnation of friends whose good opinion I esteem and whose loyalty in the past I appreciate; but, holding my views, I could not have been worthy of the confidence of the great people of this State if I had contented myself to remain silent. My position has brought satisfaction and even happiness to many humble homes in North Carolina, and the negro, whose political control I have fought with so much earnestness, has turned to me with gratitude for my support of his right to a public school education.

The Amendment drove many of them out of the State. An effort to reduce their public schools would send thousands more of them away from us. In this hour, when our industrial development demands more labor and not less, it becomes of the utmost importance that we shall make no mistake in dealing with that race which does a very large part of the work, of actual hard labor in the State. I appeal to the generous high-minded North Carolinians to realize that we are confronted with a condition which demands statesmanship and not passion and prejudice. While holding these views, it is needful for me to say that I have recognized that, heretofore, much injustice has in many instances been done to the whites in that in the same county schools were frequently maintained for six or seven months for the colored in certain districts and for only two or three months for the whites in other districts. It has been the aim of this administration to correct this inequality and to see to it that provision was made for the whites which should certainly be equal to that made for negroes. This has been done without any Constitutional Amendment, but under the plain provisions of our law. It may be of interest to you to know in this connection the facts about the expenditure of money for the public schools from 1883 to 1903. In 1883 there was spent for the schools for whites \$306,805.55; for colored \$260,955.87. There was spent \$1.04 per capita for white children and \$1.50 per capita for colored children—a difference of 48 cents in favor of the negro. . . . For 1903 there was spent for the education of the white children \$865,700.17 and for the education of colored children \$252,820.54; per capita expenditure of \$1.89 for whites and \$1.14 for the colored; a difference in favor of the whites of 75 cents per capita. These are the facts and they speak for themselves.

The danger which I have apprehended is not that we shall do too much for the negro, but that becoming unmindful of our duty to him we shall do too little. Having taken from him the power to vote, it becomes a strong people to safeguard with the utmost care every right which the negro has. "We hold our title to power by tenure of service to God," and we can never hope to win His approval if we do injustice to the weak. Let us cast away all fear of rivalry with the negro, all apprehension that he shall ever overtake us in the race of life. We are the thoroughbreds and should have no fear of winning the race against a commoner stock."

The Famous "Universal Education" Speech
(Birmingham, Ala., April, 4, 1912.)

p 318 So education is good for a vegetable, and it is good for animals, and it is good for a mule. You know the most dangerous thing in this country is an old, unbroken mule. Josh Billings said if he had to preach the funeral of a mule he would stand at his head. (Laughter.) But that is your unbroken mule. We call it "breaking" them. What is "breaking" a mule except training him, educating him, bringing out of him what there is in him? Why, when you buy a mule fresh from a drove it takes two white men and one Fifteenth Amendment to hitch him to a plow. (Laughter.) And when you get him hitched up he plows up more cotton than he does grass; but after you have broken him, trained him, developed him, educated him, why that old mule goes right along. He used to, in our State, when I was a farmer. Why, that old mule would go right along down the side of this cotton and when a clod dropped over on it she would keep her head so you could lift it off. (Laughter.) I have done it and I know how to do it; I say what I believe because I know that if you don't let me make a living practising law or in politics I can plow it out."