VII. LOOKING FORWARD

How two theories of the future of America clashed and blended just after the Civil War: the one was abolition-democracy based on freedom, intelligence and power for all men; the other was industry for private profit directed by an autocracy determined at any price to amass wealth and power. The uncomprehending resistance of the South, and the pressure of black folk, made these two thoughts uneasy and temporary allies

A printer and a carpenter, a rail-splitter and a tailor—Garrison, Christ, Lincoln and Johnson, were the tools of the greatest moral awakening America ever knew, chosen to challenge capital invested in the bodies of men and annul the private profit of slavery.

This done, two quite distinct but persistently undifferentiated visions of the future dominated the triumphant North after the war. One was the prolongation of Puritan idealism, transformed by the frontier into a theory of universal democracy, and now expressed by Abolitionists like Wendell Phillips, students of civilization like Charles Sumner, and leaders of the common people like Thaddeus Stephens, together with some of the leaders of the new labor movement. The other trend was entirely different and is confused with the democratic ideal because the two ideals lay confused in so many individual minds. This was the development of industry in America and of a new industrial philosophy.

The new industry had a vision not of work but of wealth; not of planned accomplishment, but of power. It became the most conscienceless, unmoral system of industry which the world has experienced. It went with ruthless indifference towards waste, death, ugliness and disaster, and yet reared the most stupendous machine for the efficient organization of work which the world has ever seen.

Thus the end of the Civil War was the beginning of vast economic development in the industrial expansion of the East, in the agricultural growth of the Middle West, in the new cattle industry of the plains, in the mining enterprises of the Rockies, in the development of the Pacific Coast, and in the reconstruction of the Southern market.

Behind this extraordinary industrial development, as justification in the minds of men, lay what we may call the great American Assumption, which up to the time of the Civil War, was held more or less

explicitly by practically all Americans. The American Assumption was that wealth is mainly the result of its owner's effort and that any average worker can by thrift become a capitalist. The curious thing about this assumption was that while it was not true, it was undoubtedly more nearly true in America from 1820 to 1860 than in any other contemporary land. It was not true and not recognized as true during Colonial times; but with the opening of the West and the expanding industry of the twenties, and coincident with the rise of the Cotton Kingdom, it was a fact that often a poor white man in America by thrift and saving could obtain land and capital; and by intelligence and good luck he could become a small capitalist and even a rich man; and conversely a careless spendthrift though rich might become a pauper, since hereditary safeguards for property had little legal sanction.

Thus arose the philosophy of "shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves," on which the American theory of compensated democracy was built. It asked simply, in eighteenth century accents, freedom from government interference with individual ventures, and a voice in the selection of government officials. The continued freedom of economic opportunity and ever possible increase of industrial income, it took for granted. This attitude was back of the adoption of universal suffrage, the disappearance of compulsory military service and imprisonment for debt, which characterized Jacksonian democracy. The American Assumption was contemporary with the Cotton Kingdom, which was its most sinister contradiction. The new captains of industry in the North were largely risen from the laboring class and thus living proof of the ease of capitalistic accumulation. The validity of the American Assumption ceased with the Civil War, but its tradition lasted down to the day of the Great Depression, when it died with a great wail of despair, not so much from bread lines and soup kitchens, as from poor and thrifty bank depositors and small investors.

The American labor movement, founded in the spirit that regarded America as a refuge from oppression and free for individual development according to conscience and ability, grew and expanded in America, basing itself frankly upon the American Assumption. Its object was rule by the people, the wide education of people so that they could rule intelligently, and economic opportunity of wealth free for thrift. It found itself hindered by slavery in the South: directly, because of the growing belief of the influential planter class in oligarchy and the degradation of labor; and indirectly by the competition of slave labor and the spread of the slave psychology. It became, therefore, at first more and more opposed to slavery as ethically wrong, politically dangerous, and economically unprofitable.

Capital, on the other hand, accepted widespread suffrage as a fact forced on the world by revolution and the growing intelligence of the working class. But since the new industry called for intelligence in its workers, capitalists not only accepted universal suffrage but early discovered that high wages in America made even higher profits possible; and that this high standard of living was itself a protection for capital in that it made the more intelligent and best paid of workers allies of capital and left its ultimate dictatorship undisturbed. Nevertheless, industry took pains to protect itself wherever possible. It excluded illiterate foreign voters from the ballot and advocated a reservoir of non-voting common labor; and it stood ready at any time by direct bribery or the use of its power to hire and discharge labor, to manipulate the labor vote.

The true significance of slavery in the United States to the whole social development of America, lay in the ultimate relation of slaves to democracy. What were to be the limits of democratic control in the United States? If all labor, black as well as white, became free, were given schools and the right to vote, what control could or should be set to the power and action of these laborers? Was the rule of the mass of Americans to be unlimited, and the right to rule extended to all men, regardless of race and color, or if not, what power of dictatorship would rule, and how would property and privilege be protected? This was the great and primary question which was in the minds of the men who wrote the Constitution of the United States and continued in the minds of thinkers down through the slavery controversy. It still remains with the world as the problem of democracy expands and touches all races and nations.

The abolition-democracy was the liberal movement among both laborers and small capitalists, who united in the American Assumption, but saw the danger of slavery to both capital and labor. It began its moral fight against slavery in the thirties and forties and, gradually transformed by economic elements, concluded it during the war. The object and only real object of the Civil War in its eyes was the abolition of slavery, and it was convinced that this could be thoroughly accomplished only if the emancipated Negroes became free citizens and voters.

The abolition-democracy saw clearly the difficulties of this step, due to the ignorance and poverty of the freedmen. For the first time in the classic democracy in the United States, it was made aware that the American Assumption was not and could not be universally true. Some of the leaders of the labor movement even came to see that it was not true in the case of the mass of white labor. But that

thought came to the Abolitionists afterwards and in the minds of only a few clear-sighted men like Wendell Phillips.

At the time of the Civil War, it was, however, perfectly clear to Sumner and Stevens that freedom in order to be free required a minimum of capital in addition to political rights and that this could be insured against the natural resentment of the planters only by some sort of dictatorship. Thus abolition-democracy was pushed towards the conception of a dictatorship of labor, although few of its advocates wholly grasped the fact that this necessarily involved dictatorship by labor over capital and industry.

On the other hand, industrialists after the war expected the South to seize upon the opportunity to make increased profit by a more intelligent exploitation of labor than was possible under the slave system. They looked upon free Negro labor as a source of profit, and considered freedom, that is, a legal doing away with individual physical control, all that the Negroes or their friends could ask. They did not want for Negro labor any special protection or political power or capital, any more than they wanted this for Irish, German or Scandinavian labor in the North. They expected some popular education and a gradual granting of the right to vote, which would be straitly curtailed in its power for mischief by the far larger power of capital.

The South, however, persisted in its pre-war conception of these two tendencies in the North. It sought to reëstablish slavery by force, because it had no comprehension of the means by which modern industry could secure the advantages of slave labor without its responsibilities. The South, therefore, opposed Negro education, opposed land and capital for Negroes, and violently and bitterly opposed any political power. It fought every conception inch by inch: no real emancipation, limited civil rights, no Negro schools, no votes for Negroes.

In the face of such intransigence, Northern industry was, on the whole, willing to yield, since none of these concessions really obstructed the expansion of industry and capital in the nation. When, however, the South went beyond reason and truculently demanded not simply its old political power but increased political power based on disfranchised Negroes, which it openly threatened to use for the revision of the tariff, for the repudiation of the national debt, for disestablishing the national banks, and for putting the new corporate form of industry under strict state regulation and rule, Northern industry was frightened and began to move towards the stand which abolition-democracy had already taken; namely, temporary dictatorship, endowed Negro education, legal civil rights, and eventually even votes for Negroes to offset the Southern threat of economic attack.

The abolition-democracy was not deceived. It at once feared and dared. It wanted no revenge on the South and held no hatred. It did want to train Negroes in intelligence, experience and labor, the ownership of land and capital, and the exercise of civil rights and the use of political power. In the advocacy of these things it reached the highest level of self-sacrificing statesmanship ever attained in America; and two of the greatest leaders of the ideal, Stevens and Sumner, voluntarily laid down their lives on the altar of democracy and were eventually paid, as they must have anticipated they would be paid, by the widespread contempt of America.

Even to this day, the grandsons of Abolitionists, ashamed of their fathers' faith in black men, are salving their conscience with a theory that democratic government by intelligent men of character is impossible, when, in fact, nothing else is possible; and the grandsons of the planters and of the poor whites who displaced them are excusing their apostasy to civilization by charging the Negro with all the evil caused by war, destruction and greed, and by the deeds of white men, Northern and Southern.

The abolition-democracy advocated Federal control to guide and direct the rise of the Negro, but they desired this control to be civil rather than military, like the strict government of territories until new states should develop. They had to help them in the furtherance of this plan a degree of enthusiasm, humility and hard work on the part of the depressed Negro which is not paralleled in modern history. When now they were offered alliance with Northern industry, temporary military control instead of civil government, and then immediate citizenship and the right to vote for Negroes, instead of a period of guardianship, they accepted because they could not refuse; because they knew that this was their only chance and that nothing else would be offered. Their theory of democracy led them to risk all, even in the absence of that economic and educational minimum which they knew was next to indispensable. When Sumner saw his failure here, he went home and wept. But the belief in the self-resurrection of democracy was strong in these men and lent unconscious power to the American Assumption. They expected that both Northern industry and the South, in sheer self-defense, would have to educate Negro intelligence and depend on Negro political power.

The South was too astonished for belief, when it saw industry and democracy in the North united for a policy of coercion. In the past, the South had always been able by mere gesture of concession to bring Northern industry to its knees begging. It did not realize how strong Industry had grown and how conscious its power; and how boundless its plans. It did not realize that the basis of the

South's own power had literally been swept away. Even the West, on which the South had long counted in theory, although sympathy had seldom led to effective action, while it fought industrial monopoly, the national debt and the money power, yet when it had to choose between a continuation of Southern oligarchy and a great democratic movement, swung inevitably towards democracy. Northern capital went South and vied with the planters for the direction of the Negro vote. The poor whites scurried to cover, now here, now there, and a dictatorship of labor ensued, with a new democratic Constitution, new social legislation, public schools and public improvements. But of that we shall speak more in detail in later chapters.

On the other hand, Northern industry seemed at last free and untrammeled. It began in 1876 an exploitation which was built on much the same sort of slavery which it helped to overthrow in 1863. It murdered democracy in the United States so completely that the world does not recognize its corpse. It established as dominant in industry a monarchical system which killed the idea of democracy.

The basis of the argument for Negro suffrage has usually been interpreted as a gesture of vengeance. But it was much deeper than this. It was phrased, first by Abraham Lincoln himself, as a method of retaining "the Jewel of Liberty in the Family of Freedom"; this was echoed, however unwillingly, by Andrew Johnson as a sop to the Radicals; but it gradually came in the thought of the nation to be an inescapable thing. Votes for Negroes were in truth a final compromise between business and abolition and were forced on abolition by business as the only method of realizing the basic principles of abolition-democracy.

All of the selfishness, cunning and power that were back of the new industry of the North have been looked upon as simply the other side of abolition-democracy; and the reason for this was that in several cases, the two ideas were mingled in individuals' minds. One can see that in the sermons of Henry Ward Beecher, who was a great advocate of votes for Negroes, but nevertheless instinctively capitalistic; standing on the side of the exploiter, he had scant sympathy for the exploited. There was something of this, although not nearly as much, in the case of Thaddeus Stevens, who was at heart the greatest and most uncompromising of abolitionist-democrats, but who advocated not only universal suffrage and free schools, but protection for Pennsylvania iron; yet in that protection he had just as distinctly in mind the welfare of the laborer as the profit of the employer.

What, then, was the strength of the democratic movement which succeeded the war? In many respects it was emotional. It swept the land with its music and poetry. A war, which to the intense dissatisfac-

tion of the Abolitionists had begun with the distinct object, even on the part of the great Emancipator, to save and protect slavery, and in no way to disturb it, except to keep it out of competition with the free peasant of the West, had resulted in Emancipation. Men like William Lloyd Garrison, who had no sympathy with the platform of the Republicans in 1860, became suddenly the center of the stage of the new dispensation. Thus, a legal-metaphysical dispute, involving the right of slave states to expand into the territories, was rapidly changed, first to a question of freedom for slaves, and then to a struggle for inaugurating a new form of national government in the United States.

When the physical war ended, then the real practical problems presented themselves. How was slavery to be effectively abolished? And what was to be the status of the Negroes? What was the condition and power of the states which had rebelled? The legal solution of these questions was easy. The states that had attempted to rebel had failed. They must now resume their relations to the government. Slavery had been abolished as a war measure. This should be confirmed and extended by a constitutional amendment. Some control of the Negro population must be devised in the place of slavery, so as to introduce the Negro into his new freedom. The power of the national government had been greatly expanded by war. This expansion must be consolidated so that in the future secession would be impossible and slavery never reëstablished.

The difficulty with this legalistic formula was that it did not cling to facts. Slavery was not abolished even after the Thirteenth Amendment. There were four million freedmen and most of them on the same plantation, doing the same work that they did before emancipation, except as their work had been interrupted and changed by the upheaval of war. Moreover, they were getting about the same wages and apparently were going to be subject to slave codes modified only in name. There were among them thousands of fugitives in the camps of the soldiers or on the streets of the cities, homeless, sick and impoverished. They had been freed practically with no land nor money, and, save in exceptional cases, without legal status, and without protection.

Negroes deserved not only the pity of the world but the gratitude of both South and North. Under extraordinary provocation they had acted like decent human beings; they had protected their masters' families, when their masters were away fighting for black slavery. They did this naturally because they were not sure that the North was fighting for freedom, and because they did not know which side would win. But, at any rate, they did it. And even when they understood that the North, willing or unwilling, was bound towards freedom, and

that they could fight for their own freedom, they were neither vindictive nor cruel towards their former masters, although they were quite naturally widely accused of "laziness" and "impudence," which are the only weapons of offense which a rising social class can easily use.

These black men wanted freedom; they wanted education; they wanted protection. They had been of great help to the Union armies and that help had been given under great stress. Black soldiers had been outlawed, and in many cases ruthlessly murdered by the enemy who refused to regard them as soldiers or as human. They took chances every time they put on a uniform. Yet after the war they were still not free; they were still practically slaves, and how was their freedom to be made a fact? It could be done in only one way. They must have the protection of law; and back of law must stand physical force. They must have land; they must have education. How was all this to be done?

Lincoln tried hard in the Border States, long before the end of the war, to get voluntary emancipation and pay for the slaves, so that a new system of labor under favorable circumstances could be arranged. The Border States would have none of it. The war ended in anarchy as war always ends. The cost had been so great that there could be no thought of pay for the slaves, even on the part of the South, after the first flush of Reconstruction. There was no possibility of paying for capital destroyed in other ways, or of quickly restoring the neglected land and tools.

Thus by the sheer logic of facts, there arose in the United States a clear and definite program for the freedom and uplift of the Negro, and for the extension of the realization of democracy. Some of the men who had this vision were identified with the new industry, but saw no incongruity or opposition between their ideas or between the rise and expansion of tariff-protected corporations and their equally sincere beliefs in democratic methods. Others were not identified with industry at all. They were, some of them, rich men, supported by incomes derived from industry; most of them were poor men earning a salary. Some of them were laborers. These men started from the Abolitionist's point of view. Slavery was wrong because it reduced human beings to the level of animals. The abolition of slavery meant not simply abolition of legal ownership of the slave; it meant the uplift of slaves and their eventual incorporation into the body civil, politic, and social, of the United States. There was, of course, much difference as to the exact extent of this incorporation, but less and less desire to limit it in any way by law.

The Negro must have civil rights as a citizen; he must eventually have political rights like every other citizen of the United States. And