

# The Forum.

DECEMBER, 1888.

## COUNT TOLSTOI'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS.

IN a previous article on Count Tolstoi I expressed my admiration for the sincerity which he has proved by absolutely conforming his life to the convictions at which he has arrived. He claims to have gained perfect peace and happiness from his sudden discovery of the true meaning of Christ's teaching. Whereas he once hated life and dreaded death, he now enjoys a complete serenity and a tranquil empire over himself. Whereas life once appeared to him appalling in its emptiness, and he experienced the thrice-doubled "vanity" of the Preacher, he now lives with "happy yesterdays and confident to-morrows." Whereas wealth and fame and rank and comfort once seemed to him to slip into ashes at a touch, like the body of an exhumed king, he now finds contentment, hope, health, and blessedness in the life of a peasant and the toil of a shoemaker.

I have no doubt that in all this he does not deceive himself. In all sincerity and in all self-sacrifice there lies a potent alchemy, and the extent to which true happiness depends on external surroundings is inappreciable in comparison with what it gains from those elements of contentment and charity which have more power than aught beside to make our thoughts

"Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,  
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves."

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## A SIMPLER SOUTHERN QUESTION.

I. To bring any public question fairly into the open field of literary debate is always a long step toward its final adjustment. It is across that field that the question must go to be so purged of its irrelevancies, misinterpretations, and misuses, personal, partisan, or illogical, and so clarified and simplified, as to make it easy for the popular mind to take practical and final action on it and settle it once for all by settling it right.

It is in this field that the Negro problem still forces itself to the front as a living and urgent national question. Such distinguished and honored men as Messrs. Hampton, Chandler, Colquitt, Foraker, Halstead, Edmunds, and Watterson are engaged in its debate, and in the October number of the FORUM Senator Eustis writes that "this Negro question is still a running sore in our body politic," and that among the problems of this country it "promises to be the most serious of all," and "is still far from being solved."

Now, it is only fair to assume that each and all the writers who have turned aside from the more effective partisan media of the daily newspaper, legislative halls, the public platform, and the "stump," to the pages of the magazines and reviews, have done so in the desire to help the question along toward its final solution by aiding to make it in each case clearer and simpler than it was before. If so, then we may assume also that writers, editors, and readers will not repel an effort, if it be intelligent and sincere, to gather from several of these writers' utterances some conclusive replies to questions whose answer and removal from the debate will greatly reduce the intricacies of the problem.

II. Can the Southern question be solved? There are men, in North and South, who say no, and, without being at all able to tell what they mean by the phrase, think it must be "left to solve itself." But careful thinkers, on either side of the question, never so reply. Their admission, whether tacit or expressed, is that

"can be" is out of the debate; it *must be* solved. It is a running, not a self-healing sore; one of those great problems "whose solution," as Mr. Eustis says, "strains the bonds of society and taxes the wisest statesmanship"; that kind of problems with some one of which "every nation must deal." We must solve it.

Is it being solved? We look in vain for any one's direct yes or no. Gov. Colquitt seems to come nearest to the distinct affirmation when he says: "A sense of moral and religious responsibility is restraining and directing us in our State polity and practice; and . . . I think we have had more than an average success in discharging the obligations imposed upon us." Among these he includes pointedly the assuring of the Negro in the full enjoyment of his political rights. But setting out to speak for the South, he speaks in fact only for Georgia, and makes no plain claim that, even so, the Negro question in Georgia is really being pushed toward its settlement. On the other hand, when Senator Chandler says: "The political control of the United States is now in the hands of a Southern oligarchy as persistent and relentless as was that which plunged the nation into the slaveholders' rebellion;" and when Senator Eustis falls short only by a slender "if" of the blunt assertion that "the Negro problem still exists in its original relations," these gentlemen surely are not to be understood as implying that the question has made or is making no advance toward solution. Both of them yield a recognition of facts which make it unreasonable so to construe their meaning. In truth, it is indisputable facts that we need from which to draw our final answer to this important query, rather than any person's or any multitude of persons' general assurances or ever so profound beliefs. And for some such facts we are indebted to these gentlemen as well as to others.

III. The Negro question is three-quarters of a century old. Within that period a vast majority of the nation have totally changed their convictions as to what are the Negro's public rights. Within that period the sentiment of every community and the laws of every State in the Union as well as of the federal government, have been radically altered concerning him. In their dimensions, in their scope, in their character, the problem's original relations have passed through a great and often radical change.

So far from the problem still existing in its original relations, only two or three of those original relations any longer exist. Within the memory of men still in active life there was not a foot of soil under the American flag where a Negro detected fleeing from slavery was safe from violence. Now, it is several months since it was asserted in the FORUM\* that the Negro in the United States "has enjoyed for at least twenty years a larger share of private, public, religious, and political liberty than falls to the lot of any but a few people—the freest in the world," and thus far no writer, black or white, has challenged the statement. And the vast changes that have been effected—not by time, mark it, but by men, sometimes at peril, sometimes at cost, of their lives, in Northern States as well as in Southern—have been very uniformly in the direction of the great problem's simplification and solution. The problem is being solved; slowly, through the years, it is true; in pain, in sweat, in blood, with many a mistake, many a discouragement, many an enemy, and, saddest of all, many a neutral friend in North and South; yet it is being solved, and it is only by misconceiving the motive of those who have effected these changes that Mr. Eustis, for instance, can call the long, fruitful, and still persistent and determined effort an "unsuccessful experiment." For it is not, and never has been an effort "to balance or equalize the condition of the white and Negro races in this country," but only to balance or equalize their enjoyment of their public and political rights, to establish a common and uniform public justice and equity, and trust the untrammelled selections of private society and "the laws of nature and nature's God" still to maintain all proper equalities and inequalities of race and condition. The fact must be admitted by all fair minds to be established and removed from debate, that in some aspects, at least, the Negro problem's "original relations" are altered, when men like Governor Colquitt, men in the front ranks of political life, their political fortunes largely dependent on what they say, eagerly choose to deny with indignation that either they or their constituents, in States where once it was against the law to teach a colored child to read, now either practice or believe in the entire or partial suppression of the Negro's vote, and as eagerly

\* "What shall the Negro Do?" The FORUM, August, 1888.

boast—with statistical figures to back them—that their public schools are educating twice as many thousands of colored youth now as they were educating hundreds fifteen years ago. True, there are men in the South who talk very differently. Aye, and in the North, too. When there are none such left in the Southern States they will be far ahead, at least of where the Northern are now, toward the whole question's final solution.

IV. One of the most conclusive proofs that the changes that have been made in the Negro's *status* have been generally in the direction of true progress, is that wherever and whenever these changes have been made complete and operative, opposition to them has disappeared and they have dropped out of the main problem, leaving it by so much the lighter and simpler. The most notable instance, of course, is the abolition of slavery; but there are many lesser examples in the history of both Northern and Southern States: the teaching of Negroes in private schools; their admission into public schools; their sitting on juries; their acceptance as court witnesses; their riding in street cars; their enlistment in the militia; their appointment on the police, etc. It is a fact worthy of more consideration than it gets from the debaters on either side of the Negro question, that such changes as these, which nobody finds any reason for undoing in any place where they have been fully established, were, until they were made, as fiercely opposed and esteemed as dishonorable, humiliating, unjust, and unsafe to white men and women, as those changes which, in many regions of our country, not all of them Southern, still remain to be made before the Negro question will let itself be dismissed. This fact no one will dispute. Yet thousands shut their eyes and ears, or let others shut them, to the equal though not as salient truth of this fact's corollary, to wit: that every step toward the perfecting of one common public liberty for all American citizens is opposed and postponed only where it never has been fairly tried.

Even the various public liberties intended to be secured to all men alike by the Civil Rights Bill have rarely if ever, in any place, been actually secured and made operative and afterward withdrawn and lost. Only where they have been merely legalized and not practically established, but bitterly fought and successfully

nullified throughout reconstruction days, have they since been unlegalized, condemned, and falsely proclaimed to have been fairly tried and found wanting. The infamous Glenn bill, in the Georgia legislature, may be thrust before us by debaters of the passionate sort on either side as a glaring exception; but its fate, its final suffocation, makes it more an example than an exception, even though this was effected by a compromise which will hardly be brought forward as evidence of "a sensibility of honor that would 'feel a stain like a wound.'"\*

V. But the Negro vote. Surely, many will say, that was abundantly tried, and earned its own condemnation in the corruptions and disasters of the reconstruction period. Now this would be a fair statement only if the ultimate purpose of the reconstruction scheme had been simply to secure the Negro in his right to vote. We shall see that it was not. Much less was it to establish, to use Senator Hampton's phrase, "the political supremacy of the Negro," or, as Mr. Watterson charges, to erect "a black oligarchy at the South," or, as Governor Colquitt puts it, "to Africanize the States of the South." These definitions belong—to borrow again Mr. Watterson's thought—to the hysterics of the question. That fervid writer more than half refutes the charge when he follows it closely with the assertion that "the scheme was preposterous in its failure to recognize the simplest operation of human nature upon human affairs, and in its total lack of foresight." But surely, whatever may be said of Sumner, Stevens, and the men who gathered around them, they were not a herd of perfect fools with a "total lack of foresight." Not the scheme was, but the charge that this was the scheme is, "preposterous." The scheme included the establishment of the Negro in his right to vote; but its greater design was, as we have stated in an earlier paper,† "to put race rule of all sorts under foot, and set up the common rule of all," or rather "the consent of all to the rule of a minority the choice of the majority, frequently appealed to without respect of persons." As to the Negro in particular, the design, even at its extreme, was to enable him—and here we are indebted to Mr. Eustis for a phrase—"to share with the white man the political

\* Governor Colquitt, in the FORUM, November, 1887.

† The London "Contemporary Review," March, 1888.

responsibility of governing"; or, more exactly, the political responsibility of choosing governors. This scheme was never allowed a fair trial in any of the once seceding States. Every effort to give it such was powerfully opposed by one great national political party throughout the whole union, "while"—to quote again from the same earlier paper—"the greater part of the wealth and intelligence of the region directly involved held out sincerely, steadfastly, and desperately against it and for the preservation of unequal public privileges and class domination." "We thought we saw," says Governor Colquitt, speaking for that Southern wealth and intelligence for which he has so large a right to speak, "a determined effort so completely to Africanize," etc. But Senator Eustis, who also has his right to speak for them, treats that thought as an absurdity worthy only the utterance of "that foul bird of prey, the carpet-bagger," who, he writes, "encouraged the *deluded Negro* to believe that the federal government intended that he should govern the white race in the South." The thought *was* an absurdity; an absurdity so palpable that an intelligent people must have rejected it but for the conviction behind it that, whatever might be the experiment's design, "Negro supremacy" would be the result. And here Messrs. Eustis, Colquitt, Hampton, and the rest seem to agree. This seems to be the potential conviction of all who speak or write on that side of the debate; and we dwell upon the fact because it furnishes such weighty evidence of the entire truth of our earlier statement that this conviction, this fear, is the whole tap-root of the Negro question to-day. Man elsewhere may hold some conjectural belief in "race antagonisms," or even in their divine appointment. Nowhere in the world do the laws forbid a man this belief. In every land, be it Massachusetts, Martinique, or Sierra Leone, he may indulge it to his heart's content in every private relation. It is only where a people are moved by the fear of "Negro supremacy" that the simple *belief* in a divinely ordered race antagonism is used to justify the withholding of impersonal public rights which belong to every man because he is a man, and with which race and its real or imagined antagonisms have nothing whatever to do. It is only under that fear that men stand up before the intelligent and moral world saying, "If this



instinct does not exist it is necessary to invent it."\* There is a Negro question which belongs to private society and morals and to the individual conscience: the question what to do to and with the Negro within that realm of our own private choice where public law does not and dare not come. But the Negro question which appeals to the nation, to the laws, and to legislation, is only, and is bound to be only, the question of public—civil and political—rights. Mr. Eustis says truly, "Our plain duty should be not to make its solution more difficult"; but when he occupies eleven pages of the FORUM with a recriminative entanglement of these two matters, one entirely within, the other entirely beyond, the province of legislation, he is wasting his own and his readers' time and impeding the solution of the *public* question; and we here challenge him, or any writer of his way of thinking, to show from the pen of any Negro of national reputation, Douglass, Lynch, Bruce, Downing, Williams, Grimke, Matthews, Fortune, or any other, anything but their repudiation of this—blind, let us believe, rather than wilful—attempt to make a "Siamese union," as Mr. Gladstone would say, between these two distinct issues. As far as it is or of right can be a municipal, State, inter-State, or national problem at all, the question to-day, pruned of all its dead wood, is this: Shall the Negro, individually, enjoy equally, and only equally, with the white man individually, that full measure of an American citizen's public rights, civil and political, decreed to him both as his and as an essential to the preservation of equal rights between the States; or shall he be compelled to abandon these inalienable human rights to the custody of Mr. Eustis's exclusively "white man's government," and "rely implicitly upon the magnanimity of his white fellow citizens of the South to treat him with the justice and generosity due to his unfortunate condition"? Shall or shall not this second choice be forced upon him for fear that otherwise these seven (million) black and lean kine may, so to speak, devour the twelve (million) white, fat kine, and "the torches of Caucasian civilization be extinguished" in the South, despite the "race antagonism" of the most powerful fifty-three million whites on earth? Is it not

\* See "Century Magazine," April, 1885, page 911, "In Plain Black and White."



almost time for a really intrepid people to be getting ashamed of such a fear? But that this fear is the main root of the whole Southern problem is further proved by the fact that no speaker or writer on that side of the debate, North or South, ever denies it. And neither does any attempt to prove that it is well grounded. Like Senator Hampton, all these debaters content themselves with the absurd assumption that the peaceable enjoyment, by the white man and the Negro, of an equal and common civil and political citizenship was fairly tried in the reconstruction period, and that "a large class at the North" have believed in and still want "Negro supremacy" wherever the Negro is in the majority. Challenged to actual argument, they are silent, until some one asks some subordinate question: Is the Negro contented and prosperous? Is he allowed to vote? Is his vote fairly counted? Has he all his civil rights? Are outbreaks due to political causes? Then their answers are abundant again; and as final proof that not these, but the earlier question, is truly the main issue, now there are scarcely any two who do not contradict themselves and one another.

VI. The least discordance of statement on these minor points is on that of "race antagonism." And for the obvious reason that, attributed to the Negro, who always denies it, it excuses the bald assumption that no matter what he says, he must want to establish a "black oligarchy"; while, attributed to the white race, it excuses the theory that the white man cannot even by way of experiment give the black man white men's rights, because natural instinct will not let him. "But you must!" says conscience. "But I can't!" says fear. Yet even on this point there is not full concord. Mr. Eustis "believes"—he counts it quite enough to "believe" and needless to prove—that this instinctive antagonism justifies the subjection of the Negro, forcible if need be, to a "white man's government"; while, as far back as 1867, General Hampton "recognized that in a republic such as ours no citizen ought to be excluded from any of the rights of citizenship because of his color or of any other arbitrary distinction." Where was and where is the gentleman's instinctive race antagonism? It is not in his list of necessities. He believed "a large class" was bent on establishing "race supremacy," and if

there was to be "race supremacy" then, of course, and naturally enough, it must be the supremacy of the white race, instinct or no instinct; while Mr. Eustis regarded the race-supremacy scheme as a carpet-bagger's lie, and could justify the subjugation of the Negro mainly on the *belief* that to protest against it is "an insolent demand for the revision of the laws of nature." But under neither philosophy does the Negro get a white man's public rights.

We find still wider variances on some other points. "Is the Negro vote suppressed?" Messrs. Foraker, Edmunds, Chandler, and Halstead still roundly make the charge. But they are all of one party and are human; what is the reply of the other side? Human, too, of course; but it is also what Mr. Silas Wegg might call "human warious." Says Governor Colquitt: "We therefore will not suffer the charge . . . of defrauding the Negro out of his vote to go unchallenged. We deny, as roundly as our enemies make the charge, that the Negro is denied a right to vote."

He speaks for the whole South. He addresses himself to the "alleged suppression of the negro vote in the South," just as Mr. Watterson addresses himself to "a claim . . . that the negro vote is suppressed . . . by the white people of the South." True, Governor Colquitt speaks especially for Georgia, but he distinctly offers Georgia as a fair sample of all the Southern States, and claims for the men on "the roll of members elect from Georgia to the next Congress, and in fact that from any other Southern State," "a love of truth and honesty that would cause them to refuse the presidency if it had to be won by fraud on any one, black or white." And Governor Colquitt ought to know. But who ought to know better than Mr. Watterson? And Mr. Watterson, not some time before, but six months later, writes: "I should be entitled to no respect or credit if I pretended that there is either a fair poll or count of the vast overflow of black votes in States where there is a negro majority, or that in the nature of things present there can be." Now, the worst about these flat contradictions, in a matter confessedly involving the right to the nation's "respect and credit," and to a reputation for "love of truth and honesty," is that they will remain amicably unsettled. Each respondent will sincerely believe what he has

stated, and the whole circle of party managers on their side of the issue will go on playing "thimble, thimble" with the tormented question.

Other secondary questions fare no better. Are outbreaks between the two races in the South frequently due to political causes? For twenty years we have heard that they are and that they are not. What says Senator Eustis? He has a divinely ordered race antagonism to assert, and so tells us that, this being the cause, almost anything may be the occasion. "Some sudden unforeseen incident, political, religious, educational, social, or what not, may at any moment arouse the passions of race hatred and convulse society by the outbreak of race conflicts." To him the real cause of amazement is "that these conflicts are not more frequent and more bloody." Exactly; the race antagonism theory does not half work. What says Governor Colquitt? "Friendly relations habitually exist between our white and black citizens, and are never disturbed except on those occasions when the exigencies of party politics call for an agitation of race prejudices."

VII. Such discrepancies are broad; but they shrink to narrowness when compared with Senator Eustis's contradictions of himself. Is the Negro contented and prospering? There are actually millions of citizens wanting to know. Let Mr. Eustis answer: 1. "His [the Negro's] craving for federal tutorship is still unsatisfied. The white man's patience is to-day taxed as ever by the unending complaints of the Negro and his friends. . . . He still yearns for this fruitless agitation touching his right and his *status*." 2. "This total want of possible assimilation produces antipathy, *quasi* hostility, between the two races, North as well as South," whose manifestations "both races regard as the incidents of a struggle for supremacy and domination." 3. "If this [race antagonism] were not the case the Negro would have the right to appeal to the enlightened judgment and to the sense of justice of the American people, to protect him against the unfeeling arrogance and relentless proscription which he has so long endured as the result of the white man's intolerance." 4. "In the South to-day he is happy, contented and satisfied"! Mr. Eustis is almost as violently out of tune with himself as to the Negro's accept-

ance of his private social *status*, but we shall not quote; the question of the Negro's entrance into private white society, we again protest, is entirely outside the circle of his civil rights. No intelligent advocate of a common enjoyment of all civil rights by both races has argued to the contrary, and the present writer has never written a line in favor of it. As a moral and personal question it admits, no doubt, of public discussion, but as to its connection with any problem of political or civil rights between the two races, all that needs recognition is that it is completely out of that question.

Such is the conflict of testimony from the choicest witnesses on one side of the case. It is a common saying on that side, that communities at a distance cannot understand this Negro problem. The fact is quite overlooked that a large majority of these communities no great while back held the very same views about it that are still held so largely in the South; and the very feminine argument that opposing debaters "cannot understand" because of "profound ignorance," etc., is only an unconscious way of admitting that one's own side cannot agree upon one full and clear explanation.

Fortunately we need not insist upon uniform answers to these questions. They are secondary. Let us only push on to the problem's main citadel. Whenever it falls all really dependent questions must surrender. And many others; as, for instance, Must the average mental and moral caliber of the whole Negro race in America equal that of the white race, before *any* Negro in a Southern State is entitled to the civil and political standing decreed to all citizens of the United States except the criminal and insane? Or this: Does the Negro throughout the domain of civil rights enjoy impersonal but individual consideration, or is he subjected to a merely class treatment? The nation is tired of contradictory answers to these questions. We can waive them, if only such chosen witnesses as these Southern writers in the FORUM will answer this: Do you, with any large part of the white citizens of your State, include, in your definition of public or civil rights, all, and only, the rights that go with one's simple membership in the community and do not depend on his personal identity; and are you and they in favor of giving all citizens of

your State one common enjoyment of civil and political rights as thus defined? This is not a national party question. The Democratic Party is answering both yea and nay to this in various parts of the Union. The national party question is, whether the federal government may compel the people of a State to answer yea against their will. We waive that question. Will you, gentlemen, answer the question we ask?

Or if you can show good reason why you should not, will you answer a yet simpler one: If a free ballot and a fair count—not "a fair ballot and a free count," as a governor of Alabama once said with beaming irony when he thought all at table were of one stripe—if a free ballot and a fair count should seem about to decide that neither the Negro nor the white man may enjoy the exclusive power to fix or hold the opposite race in a separate *status* as to political and civil rights as above defined, would you or any large part of the white citizens of your State allow and protect that free ballot and fair count and stand by its decision? Look at this question closely. It is not one upon which American political parties can honestly divide. It is the question whether the American government shall or shall not be a government "of the people, by the people, for the people," according to the Constitution's definition of who the people are. We beg to be believed that every word here written is uttered in a spirit of kindness and civil fraternity. We believe that to these two questions a true American loyalty can in calm reflection give but one answer. But we as sincerely believe that these gentlemen on the other side are as honorable and loyal in their intentions and are as sincere lovers of their States' and the nation's common welfare as they certainly are courteous in debate. We trust that loyalty and courtesy for an answer.

G. W. CABLE.