

Ben Tillman's View of the Negro

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In the nineties of the last century Ben Tillman succeeded Wade Hampton and Matthew C. Butler as spokesman of South Carolina to the nation. Occupying a position of prominence in the United States Senate superior to that of any South Carolinian since the Civil War, and perhaps equal to that of any Southerner of his day, he won the attention of the American people between 1898 and 1909 by countless speeches on the race question. Almost every conceivable pretext was utilized by this assertive agitator to impose this issue upon the usually unwilling ears of the senators. He injected it into the debate over the status of the colonial possessions and over the appointment of Negroes to Federal office. From 1901 until 1909 he spent the greater part of the Senate recesses reiterating his view of the Negro before Chataqua audiences in every section of the United States. His emphatic manner of speech and his frequent invocations of the vulgarities of the South Carolina hustings always attracted large and interested crowds.

Tillman was dissatisfied with his predecessors' contradictory and unrealistic exposition of South Carolina's attitude toward its Negro majority. He cherished fervently the conviction that the Negro should be held in subjugation; and he was too honest intellectually, too "brutally frank," too anxious to be startling, to gloss over realities in the interest of interracial and intersectional harmony. He told the nation, in characteristically blunt language, that white South Carolina had triumphed over black South Carolina by the use of shotguns, election frauds and intimidations, and that white South Carolina was determined, if necessary, to maintain its supremacy by a reapplication of these methods. In order to justify this attitude, he boldly repudiated

the Jeffersonian and liberalistic clichés of his day in so far as they applied to the blacks, who, he declared, were incapable of exercising with sagacity the higher functions of civilization. This position was of course not original with Tillman; but he was the first responsible Southerner after Reconstruction to proclaim it elaborately.

Tillman's past experiences prepared him for this reactionary attitude. His first public acts had been blows for white supremacy. His long experience as a farmer had acquainted him intimately with the failings of Negro character. His reactionary views on the race question were one of the reasons why he had won political control of South Carolina in 1890. As governor and leader of his state he had, without mincing words, proclaimed undemocratic views concerning the blacks, and in the suffrage provisions of the South Carolina constitution of 1895 he had made these views into law.¹

The major premise from which Tillman drew his conclusions concerning the Negro was that the African was biologically inferior to the white man. Although he admitted that Negroes in fact were men and not baboons, he qualified this statement by saying that some of them were "so near akin to the monkey that scientists are yet looking for the missing link." The record of this "ignorant and debased and debauched race" in its African environment, he affirmed, was one of "barbarism, savagery, cannibalism, and everything which is low and degrading." It was therefore "the quintessence of folly," he concluded, to suppose that the Negro could emulate the civilization of the Anglo-Saxons.

Long years of intimate contact with Negroes made this conviction axiomatic with Tillman. Had not his observations as a child of newly arrived Africans proved that they were naturally savages? Did not his long experience with the freedmen on the farm and in politics prove that they were innately lazy, cowardly, and corrupt? He did not think it necessary to consult in a systematic fashion the mass of scientific and pseudoscientific writings of his day in which the status of the Negro was debated. He had never in his wide travels met a Southerner

¹ Francis B. Simkins, *The Tillman Movement in South Carolina* (Durham, 1926), *passim*.

deemed sensible who had views different from his own. Outsiders with contrary opinions were adjudged ignorant of the realities of Negro life; he was certain they would revise their opinions were they to visit the black belt.²

The Senator's belief in the innate inferiority of the blacks logically led to the conclusion that they should remain an inferior caste. Neither in theory nor in practice should they be given the same economic, social, or political opportunities as the whites. His clearest expression of this attitude was his repudiation of President Theodore Roosevelt's injunction, in a discussion of proper conduct toward colored troops, to "deal with each man on his merit as a man." A colored man, replied Tillman, should not have the same treatment as a white man "for the simple reason that God Almighty made him colored and did not make him white." Was it either possible or desirable, he asked rhetorically, for "the caste feelings and race antagonisms of centuries to disappear in the universal brotherhood of man?" "Feelings of revulsion," he felt, arose in the breast of every white man when such a program was suggested. The unsoundest motives, he asserted, prevented a frank confession by the North of this fact. These motives were a mistaken philanthropy born of ignorance of the blacks, and the desire to curry favor with the Negro voters of the border states.³

Tillman justified prejudices of caste mainly because they prevented the greatest social disaster of which he could conceive: the amalgamation of races. Would not the elimination of "the caste feelings and race antagonisms of centuries," he asked, mean that the Caucasian, the "highest and noblest of the five races," would disappear in an orgy of miscegenation? He even claimed that the purpose of those who would open the door of civic and social opportunity to the blacks was to make the South into a mulatto state. Roosevelt and other contemporaries would not admit this, he said; but an older and more fanatical genera-

² *Congressional Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2515 (February 23, 1903), 2565 (February 24, 1903).

³ *Ibid.*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2560-64 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1032, 1039-40 (January 12, 1907); Tillman, in *North American Review* (Boston, 1815-), CLXXI (1900), 443.

tion of advocates of Negro rights had admitted that race mixture was implied in their theories. Wendell Phillips and Theodore Tilton had openly advocated the mixture and Thaddeus Stevens had practiced it.⁴

Tillman's most original contribution to the race controversy was his justification of lynching for rape. He bluntly declared to startled senators: "As Governor of South Carolina I proclaimed that, although I had taken the oath of office to support the law and enforce it, I would lead a mob to lynch any man, black or white, who ravished a woman, black or white. This is my attitude calmly and deliberately taken, and justified by my conscience in the sight of God." On another occasion he declared, "To hell with the Constitution" when it stood in the way of mob justice to a rapist.⁵ Thousands, of course, agreed with this judgment, but only a few Southern leaders of his generation were willing to acknowledge publicly such radical views. Most of those who spoke or wrote regarding lynching condemned it upon any grounds, using arguments about the sacredness of law.

Viewing sexual misbehavior in the most intolerant light, he scorned as a coward the man who refused to shoot on sight the seducer of a wife or daughter. No wonder he saw red when a Negro violated the honor of a white woman; no treatment, in his opinion, was too severe for such a malefactor. It was Tillman's belief that by the act of rape upon a white woman the Negro was expressing, in the boldest and most horrible form at his command, his desire to break down the lines of caste and thereby effect racial amalgamation. The white women of the South were represented as "in a state of siege," surrounded by black brutes who had been taught "the damnable heresy of equality." Although they possessed only the mentality of children, these blacks roamed freely in regions inadequately policed, their breasts pulsating with the desire to sate their passions upon white maidens and wives. From forty to a hundred Southern maidens, Tillman asserted, were

⁴ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2564 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1040 (January 12, 1907).

⁵ Tillman to New York *Sun*, November 4, 1913, in Tillman Letter Book, 1913 (University of South Carolina MS.).

annually offered as a sacrifice to the African Minotaur, and no Theseus had arisen to rid the land of this terror.

With emotional intensity the South Carolina Senator portrayed the reaction of Southern white men. "The young girl thus blighted and brutalized drags herself to her father and tells him what has happened. . . . Our brains reel under the staggering blow and hot blood surges to the heart. . . . We revert to the original savage." The whole countryside would rise and a summary but just punishment would be imposed upon the malefactor. To designate such an occasion as a "lynching bee," a festive occasion, was a misnomer. "There is more," affirmed Tillman, "of the feeling of participating as mourner at a funeral" among the men who, "with set, stern faces," avenge "the greatest wrong, the blackest of crimes in all the category of crimes."

Tillman faced resolutely the allegation that lynching was an act of lawlessness. Shall men, he asked, allow a rapist trial according to the forms of law? His answer was an emphatic *No*, because the culprit had put himself outside both the human and divine law. The methods of Judge Lynch, he added, were in cases of rape superior to those of the regular courts. The latter forced the victim of the rape to undergo "a second crucifixion" of publicly testifying against the deflowerer. The former simply involved the bringing of suspects before the victim who identified her assailant in unmistakable terms so that "death, speedy and fearful," might be meted out to him.

Perhaps the Senator's justification of lynching was the most dignified answer ever made by a Southerner to those many Americans who have condemned illegal justice under any circumstances. His address was carefully prepared and free from the extemporaneous ranting which often characterized his utterances. There were quotations from Tacitus and the poets and an unaccustomed eloquence, without a sacrifice of the "brutal frankness" which usually gave force to the speaker's words. The "state of siege" which the Southern woman was supposed to endure was described vividly, as were the fate of the victim, the horrified reaction of the white man, and the solemn procession of the lynchers. If passion was stronger than logic in this speech, it was a

passion born of the high moral conviction that men should be ruthless in protecting the virtue of their women.⁶

Tillman's belief in the innate weakness of Negro character led to an extremely pessimistic view regarding the future of the race despite the opportunities extended by the abolition of slavery. In face of the optimism of hopeful Southerners he pointedly claimed that the race had retrograded, not progressed, since emancipation.

His exposition of this attitude was prefaced by an enthusiastic acceptance of the conventional Southern belief that the Negro under slavery had been exceedingly well behaved. The uplifting influence of that institution was said to have been so great that there had been "more good, Christian men and women and gentlemen and ladies" among the Southern slaves than in all Africa." But these conditions were suddenly reversed when, as a consequence of emancipation, the Negro was "inoculated with the virus of equality." Then "the poor African" became "a fiend, a wild beast, seeking whom he may devour"; then he inaugurated "misrule and anarchy and robbery" by voting for "the carpetbag hordes of thieves and scoundrels and their scalawag allies, the native born rapsallions." Horizons were lit with the fires of white men's houses and Negroes planned to kill all white men, marry white women, and use white children as servants. Among Tillman's firmest convictions was that Reconstruction was one of the most horrible experiences recorded in history. It had so demoralized the Negro that he could never recover the virtues of the slave.⁷

The attempts of the Negro since Reconstruction to achieve some of the nonpolitical objectives of that experiment were roundly ridiculed by the South Carolina Senator. The worth of the Negro was declared to be in inverse ratio to the degree in which he aspired after the higher standards of civilization. Many among the older generation who retained the attitudes of slaves, Tillman averred in 1903, were orderly and moderately industrious; but the younger generation with progres-

⁶ Authority for Tillman's utterances on lynching is his speech in *Cong. Record*, 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1440-43 (January 21, 1907).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 3223 (March 23, 1900); 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2564-65 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1443 (January 21, 1907).

sive aspirations were vagabonds "who were doing all the devilment of which we read every day." Later Tillman believed that the efforts of the race to rise in the scale of civilization had made it "altogether degenerate" and "more debased and worthless" than before. The blacks were being taught by their leaders to lie and steal as a compensation for the wrongs of slavery.⁸

Against Negro education Tillman was especially bitter. "The Northern millions" invested in Negro schools, he said, created antagonisms between the blacks and the poorer whites, and "the little smattering of education" which the blacks absorbed was "enervating and destructive of the original virtues of the Negro race." "Over-education" of Negroes, on the other hand, by stimulating ambitions impossible of attainment, created discontent which resulted in crime. The city of Washington, where intensive efforts were made to educate the blacks, was said to offer a striking illustration of this. There the Negro criminal and illegitimacy rates were high and Negro public opinion did not frown upon open violations of the moral law.⁹ Booker T. Washington, the outstanding example of the educated Negro of the times, was declared later to be "a humbug," one whom a German was forced to chastise because this educated Negro "had been making goo-goo eyes" at the German's wife.¹⁰

Such views naturally led Tillman to justify the use of fraud and violence by which the white South rid itself of Negro rule. In 1900 he told the Senate: "We took the government away. We stuffed ballot boxes. We shot them [the Negroes]. We are not ashamed of it."¹¹ And two years later he told the Republican senators: "We will not submit to negro domination under any conditions that you may prescribe. Now you have got it. The sooner you understand it fully and

⁸ *Ibid.*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2562 (February 24, 1903); Tillman to J. L. Jones, August 10, 1916, Tillman Letter Book, 1916; Tillman to B. R. Tillman, Jr., November 17, 1913, Tillman Letter Book, 1913.

⁹ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2560-66 (February 24, 1903); 60 Cong., 1 Sess., 2195 (February 19, 1908).

¹⁰ Tillman to D. G. Ambler, March 24, 1911, Tillman Letter Book, 1911.

¹¹ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 2245 (February 26, 1900). Cf. *ibid.*, 3223 (March 23, 1900); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1440 (January 21, 1907).

thoroughly, the better off this country will be."¹² The legal disfranchisement of the blacks through the "understanding clause" of the South Carolina constitution of 1895 was described as an act of great statesmanship, more consistent with civic morality, and less likely to render effective the appeals of dissatisfied white politicians to Negro voters, than were the tissue ballots and violence of earlier days.

Tillman viewed with alarm and bitterness Roosevelt's appointment of Negroes to office in the South. Such appointments were a challenge to the social fabric, entering wedges for a reversion to the horrors of Reconstruction. It made no difference, he frankly admitted, that the appointees were competent and honest; they must be kept out of office to prevent "ever so little a trickle of race equality to break through the dam." He invoked all the parliamentary skill at his command to prevent the senatorial confirmation of Roosevelt's colored appointees. But when such legal remedies were not effective, he favored mob violence as a means of driving colored men out of office. In such emergencies, he said, "our instincts as white men" provoke unlawful acts "which we feel it necessary to do."¹³

Convinced that the race question involved sinister consequences, Tillman was, throughout his career, as extreme an alarmist on this issue as any American who has ever lived. In 1903 he proclaimed that the blacks would soon attempt to capture political control in the areas where they held majorities; that, in hatred and invidious ambition, they would inevitably inaugurate a "war of the races." He thanked God that he would not live to see the eruption of this volcanic situation, and that marriage had carried two of his daughters into areas without large Negro populations.¹⁴ He urged the arming and the military organization of Southern whites, advising those unable to effect such organiza-

¹² *Ibid.*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 5102 (May 7, 1902).

¹³ Tillman's views on this issue are best stated in the debates over the Indianola (Mississippi) post office, in *ibid.*, 2 Sess., 2511-15 (February 23, 1903), 2562-65 (February 24, 1903).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 2564-65 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1440-42 (January 21, 1907); Tillman to W. E. Chandler, November 25, 1911, Tillman Letter Book, 1911.

tions to secure "buck-shot cartridges for your bird guns and duck guns."¹⁵

Such a state of mind led the South Carolinian to reject impatiently the contention that his frequent agitations of the race question were unstatesmanlike. Doctrinaires and politicians who dismissed the question with a wave of the hand, he said, were shallow thinkers who, ostrichlike, hid their heads in the sand to wait until the tempest of race war burst in fury.¹⁶

He eloquently cried against the fates for not offering a satisfactory solution of the race question after four years of bloody war and many subsequent years of contention. The Civil War, he said, had settled only two issues, slavery and nationalism. After that struggle a false idealism had combined with sordid political ambitions to tie the putrid carcass of slavery to the South by means of the social and political threats suggested by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments. In 1900 he asserted that the race question was still causing "more sorrow, more mischief, more loss of life, more expenditure of treasure" than any other American problem. "It is like Banquo's ghost, and will not down."¹⁷

Believing that a removal of this incubus must come from the dominant section of the nation, he earnestly asked Northern leaders to present a plan. But his Northern opponents replied with the suggestion that he offer a concrete solution of a problem he said was so menacing. On one occasion Senator Albert J. Beveridge, after listening for two hours to Tillman's lurid oratory, said he was willing to listen for two hours more if the South Carolinian would advance a solution. But as is often the case with agitators, Tillman was more masterful and detailed in criticism than in suggesting remedies. His remedies, such as they were, were either nebulous or unattainable. He confessed, "I do not

¹⁵ Tillman to Captain J. M. Moorer, March 4, 1912, Tillman Letter Book, 1912; Tillman to A. W. Leland, December 8, 1911, Tillman Letter Book, 1911.

¹⁶ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2560 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1442 (January 21, 1907).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 3223 (March 23, 1900); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1039 (January 12, 1907), 1443 (January 21, 1907).

know what to do about" the race question. "I do not know what to tell you to do about it. I see no end to it."¹⁸

Occasionally he professed to see a solution in the migration or expulsion of the blacks from the South. But on other occasions, and with more emphasis, he opposed their removal. Their eviction, he held, would be both cruel and impractical. "It would simply mean," he declared, "their [the Negroes'] destruction; and I do not want to destroy them." Their natural increase would be greater than the number who could be moved. They did not wish to leave the South and no law of Congress could compel them to do so. Moreover, this close student of Southern opinion admitted that the whites did not want the blacks to leave because it would cause derangement of labor and other economic ills. "We have some selfish and greedy men down there [in the South] who want to hold on to the Negroes as laborers," said Tillman. But he hoped he would not be placed among this number.¹⁹

The most tangible reform that he could suggest was that the Fifteenth—and sometimes the Fourteenth—Amendment be repealed. He believed that such a formal declaration by the North of surrender in the struggle to give the Negro political and civil equality would make the black man better satisfied with his inferior position and thereby pave the way for greater harmony between the races. But the South Carolina leader did not press this objective to a vote in Congress or in the National Democratic conventions, contenting himself with efforts to educate Northern public opinion to his attitude. When in 1910 ill health forced him to stop public agitation of the race question, he rightly concluded that the time was not ripe for his constitutional proposal. In his opinion the cowardly politicians of both parties, and the unwillingness of Northern leaders to acknowledge defeat, made

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 5102 (May 7, 1902); 2 Sess., 2556 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1040 (January 12, 1907), 1444 (January 21, 1907).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 5103 (May 7, 1902); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1042 (January 12, 1907); correspondence with Bishop H. M. Turner, *ibid.*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2565-66 (February 24, 1903); Tillman, *The Negro Problem and Immigration: Address before the S. C. House of Representatives, Jan. 24, 1908* (Columbia, 1908); Tillman to Lula H. McKie, October 15, 1917, Tillman Letter Book, 1917; Tillman to R. A. Meares, July 18, 1916, Tillman Letter Book, 1916.

this impractical. Thereafter he waited hopefully, but the proper moment did not come in his lifetime.²⁰

As far as concrete results were concerned, he had to be contented with the somewhat vague assurance that the North was tacitly permitting the South to solve its race problem on its own terms. This the North, despite Tillman's alarmist interpretations, had generally learned to do some years before the South Carolinian became a national agitator. The white South, if left to itself, could solve its problems with the co-operation of its "good" Negroes; for Tillman was too thorough a Southerner not to appreciate the elements of servility and subordination which characterized the Southern blacks as a whole. No Southerner was more effusive than he in praising those Negroes who accepted the position of inferiority assigned to them by the white South. There were, he said, millions of such Negroes in the South, and for them he shared with other Southerners "a universal feeling of respect and admiration."

As an illustration of this confidence he never tired of presenting the case of his servant Joe Gibson and Joe's wife, Kitty, who served the Tillman family forty-odd years. Both were illiterate ex-slaves who had no political aspirations, and who accepted, as a matter of course, social subordination as well as the primitive living standards to which Southern Negroes were accustomed. Tillman showed his confidence in Joe by putting him in charge of his plantation during the Senator's absence. "A more loyal friend," said the master, "no man ever had."²¹

The significance of Tillman's anti-Negro views does not lie in their originality or scientific accuracy. Except for his justification of lynching, his perceptive but prejudiced arguments were merely emphatic repetitions of words heard wherever Southerners gathered to discuss their problems. His thoughts were too morbid and too extravagant to seem reasonable to anyone but the most pronounced believer in the doctrine

²⁰ Tillman, *Struggles of 1876* (Anderson, S. C., 1909), 12-15; Tillman to D. M. Taylor, May 22, 1911, Tillman Letter Book, 1911; and Tillman to James K. Vardaman, October 8, 1913, Tillman Letter Book, 1913.

²¹ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 2562 (February 24, 1903); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1443 (January 21, 1907).

of superior and inferior races. Moreover, the Senator never expounded his views of the Negro in an orderly fashion; with unlimited space in the *Congressional Record* and time on the Chataqua platform at his command, he said what he pleased in a hit and miss manner, disregarding repetitions and contradictions and heedless of logical classifications.

But these views revealed bluntly and truthfully to an interested North what the majority of Southerners actually felt concerning the Negro. Since the Civil War it had been customary for the leaders of the whites to speak or write evasively about race relations. The average Southerner, however, was thinking in more definite terms. He was believing that the Negro was made of inferior clay and should be suppressed in his attempts to rise politically or socially. It was therefore inevitable, when Tillman expounded these views in the North, among a supposedly hostile people, that waves of applause resounded from the Potomac to the Rio Grande. Enlightened Southerners said that the words of the South Carolina Senator were harsh and imprudent; but to the white masses of the South they were all wisdom, all a courageous flinging of irrefutable doctrines in the face of the enemy. The crudeness and extravagance of the arguments stimulated a popular interest which could not have been aroused by less demagogic utterances.

The best proof of this was the South's reaction to these speeches. It is true that the better educated Southerners were pained that the successor of Calhoun, Hampton, and the Butlers should have talked as he did. Tillman's Southern colleagues signified their disapproval by withdrawing from the floor of the Senate during his anti-Negro tirades.²² But no Southern senator dared reply; no Southern politician dared make the Negro question a campaign issue against the South Carolina leader. They knew that his words made him popular at home, and he had convincing proof of this popularity. It came in the form of thousands of letters of approval and in the form of applauding crowds whenever he appeared in the South. Indeed, it was his "religious belief" that even his views on lynching voiced "the feeling and the

²² Senators Joseph R. Burton and John C. Spooner noted this in *ibid.*, 57 Cong. 1 Sess., 5103 (May 7, 1902); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1445-46 (January 21, 1907).

purpose of 95 per cent of the true white men of the Southern States."²³ Such popularity made him contemptuous of the hostility of the "negro-loving newspapers of the South,"²⁴ and won to his side, during the last phases of his agitations, the voices of two popular Southern demagogues, Senators James K. Vardaman and Hoke Smith.

The effects of Tillman's agitations on Northern audiences are more difficult to measure. As has been said, he did not arouse public opinion to effect the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment. Published opinions of his Negro speeches were usually hostile, sometimes violently denunciatory. One newspaper called him "the vulgar, profane, coarse, murder-glorifying, treason-uttering, scowling, vicious and uncultured Tillman."²⁵ Whenever Republican senators deigned to notice what he said, it was but to condemn. He was stigmatized as one who "can defend slavery . . . and even can boast of committing murder," and his justification of lynching was called "a retrogression to the brutal days of tyranny."²⁶ Thomas M. Patterson of Colorado, the only Democratic senator who answered the negrophobe, said that he attempted to create the impression that Democratic supremacy in the South depended on fraud and violence, and that were his views to prevail in the councils of the Democratic party, it would forfeit Northern support.²⁷

Tillman answered these attacks by claiming that his words harmonized with changing Northern attitudes on the race question. He believed that the North was growing less prejudiced against the South in its attitude toward the blacks. He felt that this change was due to several causes. One was the participation of both sections in the war with Spain. Another was the abandonment by the Republicans of the practice of discrimination against the colored races of the newly acquired colonies for the traditional cry of "the brotherhood of man." A third was the northward migration of Negroes, which was provoking

²³ *Ibid.*, 1442 (January 21, 1907).

²⁴ Tillman, *Struggles of 1876*, p. 15.

²⁵ Undated clipping from Binghampton (New York) *Evening Herald*, in Tillman Scrapbook No. 11 (University of South Carolina Library).

²⁶ Senators Burton and Spooner, in *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 5103 (May 7, 1902); 59 Cong., 2 Sess., 1444-46 (January 21, 1907).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1040-44 (January 12, 1907).

in the North race riots and a disposition to treat blacks in the Southern fashion. Claiming that all American whites had an instinctive aversion to fraternal relations with blacks, Tillman believed that the time was ripe for effective use of these tendencies in Northern public opinion. In order to bring the North to the Southern view on the race question, he felt that it was only necessary to dispel ignorance or indifference toward Southern actualities. For nine years, on the floor of the Senate and on the Chatauqua platform, he labored to destroy this ignorance and indifference.²⁸

His "campaign of education" had some of the desired effects. Wherever he went in the North great audiences applauded "every sentiment which fell from his lips."²⁹ If the War amendments were not formally repealed as the result of his agitations, they were for practical purposes being set aside during his times. This development, it is true, was under way before he entered the national arena. But are we not safe in concluding that he had a vital part in this development? "I do not doubt," he himself wrote, "that I have been instrumental in causing the Northern people . . . to have a much saner view of the Negro question and in some respects understand the dismal dangerous aspects of it."³⁰ It is believable, therefore, that the modern reactionary attitude toward the Negro dates from Ben Tillman and represents one of the most significant ways in which he influenced American life.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1442 (January 21, 1907).

²⁹ Chicago *Examiner*, November 28, 1906. Cf. numerous other clippings in Tillman Scrapbook No. 11.

³⁰ Tillman to D. M. Taylor, May 22, 1911, Tillman Letter Book, 1911.