

**FROM
SLAVE
TO
HIRELING**

**By
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Extract from, "The Negro and the Nation"

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Primitive man killed his enemy and ate him. Later, the sequel of battle was the slaying of all the vanquished and the appropriation of their goods, including women and other live stock. Then it was found more profitable to spare the conquered warrior's life and set him to do the victor's disagreeable work; more profitable, and incidentally more merciful.

Civilization advanced; wars became less general; but in the established social order that grew up there was a definite place for a great class of slaves. It was part of Nature's early law, the strong raising themselves upon the weak. Morality and religion by degrees established certain limited rights for the slave. But the general state of slavery was defended by philosophers like Aristotle; was recognized by the legislation of Judea, Greece, and Rome; was accepted as part of the established order by Jesus and the early church.

It is beyond our limits here to measure either its service, as the foundation on which rested ancient society; or the mischief that came from the supplanting of a free peasantry, as in Italy. We can but glance at the influence of Christianity, first in ameliorating its rigor, by teaching the master that the slave was his brother in Christ, and then by working together with economic forces for its abolition.

By complex and partly obscure causes, personal slavery--the outright ownership of man--was abolished throughout Christendom. Less inhuman in theory, less heartless in practice, though inhuman and harsh enough, was the serfdom which succeeded slavery and rested on Europe for a thousand years; till by slow evolution, by occasional bloody revolt, by steady advance in the intelligence and power of the laborer, compelling for him a higher status, the serf became a hired laborer and thence a citizen throughout Europe.

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