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1889

## 4-2 Letter to Miss A.M. Moffott November 13, 1889

Charles W. Chesnutt

*Fayetteville State University*

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Chestnut, Charles W

Box No. 1

Folder No. 4

Page #2

November 13, 1889

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Cleveland O. Nov 13, 1889

Miss A. M. Moffatt,  
Secy Ohio Letter Club,  
New York.

I thank you for the opportunity of reading the ~~Honorable~~ ~~ex-Congressman~~ Waddell's letter. ~~His~~ ~~statement~~ ~~of~~ ~~dislike~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~system~~ ~~of~~ ~~County~~ ~~Government~~ ~~is~~ ~~correct~~, though if given in greater detail its scope and effectiveness in nullifying ~~the~~ ~~work~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~majorities~~ ~~would~~ ~~be~~ ~~more~~ ~~readily~~ ~~understood~~. I cannot, however, quite agree with his statements as to the degree of corruption which characterizes the "Cuspid Bag" County governments. There were not all corrupt, not all equally corrupt, ~~and~~ ~~in~~ ~~fact~~, ~~Mr.~~ ~~Waddell's~~ ~~letter~~.

over what

Letter  
10  
Frank Colander

43  
2  
nor, was the financial ~~situation~~  
condition ~~got~~ so bad as the  
~~would appear to states.~~

In fact, Mr. Wendell's letter  
bore me out on this point  
in a very striking manner.  
On the second page of his letter  
he says, in one sentence: "The  
result (of Carpet Bag Government) <sup>was</sup>  
that in a very short time <sup>(the Eastern countries)</sup> they were  
overwhelmed with debt and ruined  
financially." On the same page,  
in the following paragraph he  
says that <sup>result of the</sup> after the return to the old  
system "was wonderful, for those  
which had been bankrupted  
were in a very few years out  
of debt, paying dollar for dollar.

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3

and their securities at par" ✓  
 submit that the ~~prompt recovery~~  
~~of the patent makes the danger~~  
~~not so great of~~ the two statements  
 do not harmonize perfectly;  
 the ruins which could be so easily  
 repaired could not have been  
 as complete as <sup>would seem to appear from</sup> the  
 first statement, ~~would seem~~  
 to especially taking into consid-  
 eration the fact that the recu-  
 perative power of the South  
 was very small for many years  
 after the peace. ~~It is more~~

It must also be taken into  
 consideration that ~~at the close~~  
~~of the the~~ Carpet Bag govern-

43

14

ments found the South bankrupt,  
and ~~is~~ so deeply involved in  
debt that a generation at least  
would have been required to  
pay it off in the event that the  
Confederate Government had  
been successfully maintained.  
~~With this~~ though this debt was wiped  
out by the issue of the war, the  
country was impoverished, the  
local treasuries empty, and the  
industries paralyzed. ~~So that the~~  
~~mere fact of~~ the reorganization  
of the State and County governments,  
the establishment of a common  
school system, were <sup>expens</sup> ~~as~~ neces-  
sarily more or less expensive,  
and a public debt was certainly  
not an original invention of the  
 Carpet-baggers -

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Corruption

5

But the ~~more~~ greatest mistake which Waddell, and indeed most Southerners who express themselves on this subject is in ascribing the <sup>or</sup> corruption of Carpet-bag rule to the Negroes, that it was ~~the~~ <sup>mostly due</sup> due to ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ignorance and ~~incompetence~~ <sup>inability</sup> of the ~~corrupt~~ <sup>corrupt</sup> and unscrupulous white men seems to be overlooked. Mr. Waddell will not say that Negroes engineered or profited to any great extent by the several jobs of considerable magnitude which confessedly disgraced Carpet-bag rule in North Carolina. The Negroes had no <sup>competent</sup> leaders among themselves. The white people of the South, <sup>Mr. Waddell</sup>

inexperience

↑  
smarting

6  
From the sting of defeat, stood  
sullenly aloof and gave the  
Negro neither advice nor as-  
sistance - were indeed rather  
gratified at seeing him <sup>sink</sup> ~~fall~~ <sup>get</sup> deeper  
and deeper into the slough of  
incompetency and misrule, for  
successful government by the Negro  
would have been a shock to all  
their preconceived notions about  
the Negro, which have been infinitely  
harder to bear than even the  
poorest misgovernment.

And that is the root of the  
whole trouble. The white people  
of the South do not want to be  
governed by the Negro at all,  
whether well or ill; more than  
that, they do not want the Negroes  
to share with them the power which  
their numbers justly entitle them to.

48 They prefer to curtail their own  
liberties very materially, as Wm.  
Waddell's letter admits, in order  
that they may entirely eliminate  
the Negro from political sig-  
nificance. I do not believe  
that this is necessary. One half  
of the time and <sup>ingenuity</sup> ingenuity spent  
in conciliating the Negroes, in winning  
their friendship and confidence,  
that is now spent ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> subverting  
their ~~legal~~ <sup>legal</sup> rights, would enable the  
white people of the South to govern  
by the influence which superior wealth  
station, intelligence, and experience  
in public affairs would naturally  
give them. This method of  
~~governing~~ <sup>controlling</sup> the Negroes has  
never been tried. It would require  
a change of attitude on the part of  
the Southern white people toward

by the whites.



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8

and shouldering

discontent

the colored people. It would require <sup>such</sup> a recognition of their political and civil rights so would disarm the suspicious ~~discontent~~ with which the Southern Negroes now naturally ~~are~~ regard <sup>political overtures by the whites.</sup> the whites. It would require, for instance a cessation of such pitterances as the following from the New Orleans Times - Democrat of 1889, which is a fair specimen of the average tone of the ~~colored~~ Southern press in reference to the Negro; including in the term <sup>of</sup> all people of color:

(Insert.)

~~It would require~~ No one would deny that <sup>is possible</sup> that such a state of things would be better for both races than the present ~~state~~ of system of suppressing the Negro, even ~~under cover of law~~ as is done by the County Government system of

county

North Carolina, and the more subtle  
but equally effective election  
law recently enacted for the  
purpose of "clinching" the present  
system <sup>abundantly</sup> ~~is abundantly~~ ~~a conclusion~~  
~~that would command itself~~

until

→ ~~The~~ policy of conciliation, of  
~~a kind of~~ ~~has never~~ been  
tried, and ~~until~~ it has been  
~~tried and~~ has failed, there  
will not be in the minds  
of fair-minded people <sup>any</sup> suf-  
ficient excuse for a system  
which is avowedly based on  
a denial of the principle  
of "pure Democracy" - so highly  
lauded by Southern white men ~~when~~  
~~apparently~~ in the abstract, and so  
completely ignored by them when it  
conflicts with their idea of the  
sublime superiority of the so-called  
Anglo-Saxon race.

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I do not believe that your correspond-  
ent, from his letter, or from what  
I know of his record in North  
Carolina, is one of the extreme  
Southern types & school of thought  
represented in the passage  
quoted from the Times  
~~Democrat~~

To say that the misgovernment and  
corruption of the Casper Bay county gov-  
ernments was unparalleled in history  
is ~~stating~~ a strong statement. The govern-  
ment of New York City under the Tweed  
ring, the chronic ~~political~~ political troubles  
of Central & South American States,  
the notorious corruption of Russian  
local government, are instances which  
invite comparison. And the recent defalca-  
tions of the Treasurers of Kentucky and  
Louisiana suggest, that even if the whites  
of the South have all the political

polit

Treasurers