

The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers

negro cannot be depended upon as a laborer in factories will find their theory exploded in a few years very much in the same way that dozens of other theories regarding him have been exploded.

The failure of the Vesta Cotton Mills, in Charleston, S.C., has been laid to the door of the negro. Those who have written on this subject seemingly forget, however, to state that these same mills failed once, and I think twice, under white labor and that these mills have never had colored labor exclusively in them. When I visited Charleston a few months ago and made a careful inspection of these mills, I found at least one-third of the operatives were white people, the remaining two-thirds being colored. The colored people, as I remember it, occupied two floors and the whites the other floor, so that the failure cannot be wholly ascribed to colored labor.

Few cotton mills North or South have succeeded in large cities where there is no opportunity to segregate and control the labor. If the negro is given a fair trial in a small village, or in a country district where he is so situated in his home life that the operators can control, as they do in the case of the white laborer, the life of families, I believe that the negro will succeed in the cotton factory equally as well as the white man. Until such fair trial is given him it is unfair and misleading to make sweeping statements regarding his reliability in this respect.

In further proof of my statement that the negro can succeed in factory work if given a fair opportunity, I refer to the employment of colored persons in the silk factory at Fayetteville, N.C., a small town where conditions are much more conducive to factory life than in Charleston. Mr. H. E. C. Bryant, a white man and one of the editors of the *Charlotte Daily Observer*, published at Charlotte, N.C., recently visited this silk factory in Fayetteville and after his visit said in his paper:

“It is the most unique and interesting manufacturing plant in the state, if not in the entire South. It is managed by Rev. T. W. Thurston,⁵ a mulatto, born in Pennsylvania and educated in Philadelphia, and who is highly respected by the white and colored citizens of Fayetteville.”

Mr. Bryant further remarks:

“It has proved a signal success. Its continued success will mean