



## Following the Color Line

*Ray Stannard Baker*

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**Following the Color Line** Ray Stannard Baker

This volume was published in 1908.

“I AM OBLIGED TO CONFESS THAT I DO NOT REGARD THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY AS A MEANS OF PUTTING OFF THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE TWO RACES IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.”

—De Tocqueville, “Democracy in America” (1835)

From the Preface:

My purpose in writing this book has been to make a clear statement of the exact present conditions and relationships of the Negro in American life. I am not vain enough to imagine that I have seen all the truth, nor that I have always placed the proper emphasis upon the facts that I here present. Every investigator necessarily has his personal equation or point of view. The best he can do is to set down the truth as he sees it, without bating a jot or adding a tittle, and this I have done.

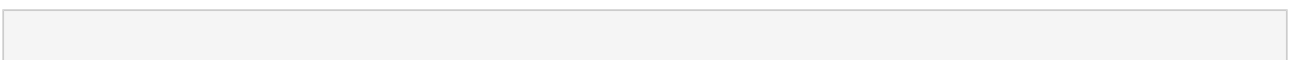
I have endeavoured to see every problem, not as a Northerner, nor as a Southerner, but as an American. And I have looked at the Negro, not merely as a menial, as he is commonly regarded in the South, nor as a curiosity, as he is often seen in the North, but as a plain human being, animated with his own hopes, depressed by his own fears, meeting his own problems with failure or success.

I have accepted no statement of fact, however generally made, until I was fully persuaded from my own personal investigation that what I heard was really a fact and not a rumour.

Wherever I have ventured upon conclusions, I claim for them neither infallibility nor originality. They are offered frankly as my own latest and clearest thoughts upon the various subjects discussed. If any man can give me better evidence for the error of my conclusions than I have for the truth of them I am prepared to go with him, and gladly, as far as he can prove his way. And I have offered my conclusions, not in a spirit of controversy, nor in behalf of any party or section of the country, but in the hope that, by inspiring a broader outlook, they may lead, finally, to other conclusions more nearly approximating the truth than mine.

While these chapters were being published in the American Magazine (one chapter, that on lynching, in McClure’s Magazine) I received many hundreds of letters from all parts[Pg viii] of the country. I acknowledge them gratefully. Many of them contained friendly criticisms, suggestions, and corrections, which I have profited by in the revision of the chapters for book publication. Especially have the letters from the South, describing local conditions and expressing local points of view, been valuable to me. I wish here, also, to thank the many men and women, South and North, white and coloured, who have given me personal assistance in my inquiries.

No illustrations are included in this volume.



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