

town. The registrar, looking at his application, asked him to quote the First Amendment. The black man shook his head. "Recite the Fourteenth Amendment." Again a shake of the head. "What is a bill of attainder?" Another negative response. "Tell me, nigger, don't you know anything?"

"One thing."

"What is that?"

"No nigger is going to vote in the next election." (Laughter.)

"Nigger baiting" was a standard feature of Southern political oratory. "Nigger baiting" was a fixed formula that required the affirmation that "This is a white man's country, by God, and no nigger is going to tell us what to do." It required a reference to the sacredness of Southern womanhood and what would happen to any black man who defiled it by look or gesture or, even more unthinkable, by act. It included favorable mention of "good niggers" who knew their place. It might very well include an illustrative story about "good niggers" and "bad niggers," intended to demonstrate the speaker's affection for the former variety, usually an "Uncle" somebody, Uncle Ned or Uncle Billy or Uncle Tom. When a black minister stepped forward at the Democratic Convention in 1936 to give the invocation, Senator "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina rose and stalked indignantly from the convention hall. When he ran for reelection in 1938, he made a special point of his walkout: "[When a] slew-footed, blue-gummed, kinky-headed Senegambian . . . started praying . . . I started walking, and as I . . . walked . . . it seemed to me that old John Calhoun leaned down from his mansion in the sky and whispered . . . you did right, Ed." ]

Long before the Civil War the South had formed the cult of sacred Southern womanhood. It survived the war not only intact but reinforced by inevitable stories of feminine heroism in the face of the Yankee invaders. The cult had deep psychological and political roots. In *Stars Fell on Alabama* Carl Carmer describes a University of Alabama fraternity ritual carried out at the chapter's dances: "The lights were turned out and a procession of young men carrying torches enters the room. Four carry a long cake of ice. The leader mounts a table and proposes a toast in water: 'To Woman, lovely woman of the Southland, as pure and chaste as this sparkling water, as cold as this gleaming ice, we lift this cup and we pledge our hearts and our lives to the protection of her virtue and chastity.'"

The "purity of Southern womanhood" served a dual purpose: It was a bulwark against atheistic communism and an unvarying symbol

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