CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION OF COTTON CULTURE INTO THE UNITED STATES.

Which was the land that first saw the cultivation of the cotton plant, or who were the people who first began to spin its snowy fibres into threads and weave these into cloth, will doubtless always remain among the problems which the human mind is unable to solve.

Long before the beginning of the Christian era, Herodotus, "the father of history," had written of an Indian plant "which instead of fruit, produces wool, of a finer and better quality than that of sheep,"[1] and subsequent writers from Nearchus to Pliny inform us that the culture of cotton was widespread among the people of India, Persia, Egypt, and China, and that cotton garments had long been held in high regard by the higher classes of these historic lands.[2]

But the knowledge and uses of this plant were not confined to the ancient peoples of the Eastern Hemisphere. The plant seems, indeed, to be indigenous to the tropical and semi-tropical regions of both continents. Columbus found the shrub growing wild in the islands of the West Indies, and on the South American mainland, where the natives had manufactured its fibres into garments and fishing nets.[3] In Brazil the natives were

[1] Herodotus, Book III, Chap. 106, quoted by Baines, "History of the Cotton Manufacture of Great Britain," 17–18.

[2] Baines, *Op. Cit.*, 18–19; "Encyclopedia Britannica," Ninth Ed., VI, Art. "Cotton."

[3] "Sommario dell' Indie Occidentali del S. Don Pietro Martire," in Ramusio's Collection, tom. II, 2, 4, 16, 50; reference in Baines, "History of the Cotton Manufacture," 34.

using the cotton lint for making beds when Magellan, in 1519, made his circumnavigation of the globe,[1] and Hernando Cortes, on his conquest of Mexico, found the manufacture of cotton goods by the inhabitants of this historic land already well advanced, as is evidenced by his sending to the Emperor Charles V "cotton mantles, some all white, others mixed with white and black, or red, green, yellow and blue; waistcoats, handkerchiefs, counterpanes, tapestries and carpets of cotton," in which "the colours of the cotton were extremely fine."[2] The first notice of the cotton plant in the part of North America which is now occupied by the United States, was in 1536, when De Vica found it growing in what is now the states of Louisiana and Texas.[3]

Its culture was begun very early by the English colonists in America. The first seeds seem to have been sown in 1607, the year of the arrival of the colonists in Virginia.[4]

Only two years after the settlement of Jamestown, a pamphlet entitled "Nova Britannica: Offering most Excellent Fruits of Planting in Virginia," stated that cotton would grow as well in that province as in Italy.[5] Whether the experiment of growing cotton had actually been made is uncertain, but in a later pamphlet entitled,

[1] Vicentio's "Viaggio atorno il Mondo," in Ramusio's Collection, tom. I: 353; reference in Baines, 35.

[2] Clavigero, "History of Mexico," Book VII, Secs. 57, 66; quoted by Baines, 34.

[3] Ellison, "A Centennial Sketch of the Cotton Trade of the United States," published in Latham, Alexander & Co.'s Annual Report on Cotton Movement and Fluctuations, 1892, p. 23.

[4] "Description of the New Discovered Country," British State Papers, Colonial, Vol. I, 15, I; quoted by Bruce, "Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century," I: 194.

[5] Handy, "History and General Statistics of Cotton," in "The Cotton Plant," U. S. Dept. Agric., Office of Experiment Stations, Bulletin No. 33, p. 30.

"A Declaration of the State of Virginia," published in 1620, it is stated that cotton wool was to be had there in abundance, and the next year in a list of the marketable products we find "cotton wooll, 8*d.* per pound."[1] All along through the seventeenth century and early half of the eighteenth, we find mention by travelers and others of the cultivation of the cotton plant: in Virginia in 1649; in South Carolina in 1664,[2] 1682, 1702, 1731 and 1741;[3] and in Georgia in 1735,[4] 1738,[5] and 1749. But not until the beginning of the eighteenth century was cotton regarded by most people in any other light than as a garden plant,[6] although the growth in South Carolina in 1664 is said to have been for domestic use,[4] and that cultivated by the Saltzburgers at New Ebeneezer, Georgia, in 1738, was undoubtedly so intended.[5] That the use of the domestic cotton for manufacture was, however, not yet a widespread practice in 1741, is shown by the statement of Daniel Coxe, in "A Description of the English Province of Carolana, by the Spaniards called Florida, and by the French, La Louisiane," (page 81), which he published this year, and which was made up of information collected by explorers sent out by the author's father, the "Proprietor of Carolana." "Cotton,"

[1] Bishop, "History of American Manufactures," (1866,) I: 30; Bancroft, "History of the United States," (1878,) I: 140; Donnell, "History of Cotton," 17, ff.

[2] Carroll, "Historical Collections of South Carolina;" reference in Harry Hammond's "Cotton Production in South Carolina," 14, Tenth Census of the U. S., Vol. VI.

[3] Ellison, "A Centennial Sketch," etc., 23–24.

[4] R. H. Loughbridge, "Cotton Production in Georgia," 53–4, Tenth Census of the U. S., vol. VI.

[5] S. C Jones, "The Dead Towns of Georgia," Collections of the Georgia Historical Society, IV: 24.

[6] In North Carolina enough was raised in the very beginning of the eighteenth century to furnish one-fifth of the people with their clothing. Handy, *Loc. Cit.*, 32.

says our author, "grows wild in the Codd, and in great Plenty, may be manag'd and improv'd as in our Islands, and turn to as great Account, and in Time perhaps manufactured either in the Country or in Great Britain, which will render it a Commodity still more valuable."

By the beginning of the American Revolution the possibility of making cotton a profitable crop seems to have been appreciated in all the southern colonies. One South Carolina planter already had thirty acres of the green-seed or short staple variety under cultivation near Savannah, Georgia.[1] The first provincial congress in South Carolina, which met in January, 1775, recommended the inhabitants to raise cotton,[2] and this recommendation was endorsed by the assembly of Virginia, which in its plan for the encouragement of the arts and manufactures, adopted March 27, 1775, resolved "that all persons having proper land ought to cultivate and raise a quantity of flax, hemp and cotton sufficient not only for the use of his own family, but to spare to others on moderate terms."[3]

It seems at first thought a little strange that the residents of the southern colonies, knowing the adaptability of their soil and climate for the cotton plant, should have neglected its culture for so long a time, especially as cotton from the Barbadoes and Smyrna was being sent into the country to be spun and woven into the rough garments worn by all but the wealthy classes before the Revolution.[4] The first cause for this neglect undoubtedly lay in the limited market which the American cotton grower was sure to find for

[1] W. B. Seabrook, "Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton," 9.

[2] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," I: 213.

[3] Bishop, "History of American Manufactures," (1866), I: 354.

[4] Bagnall, "The Textile Industries of the United States", I: 13.

his produce. Important as was the American domestic manufacture for supplying the home trade with articles of clothing, this domestic manufacture was discouraged and even forbidden to the colonists, and thus the prospect of an expanding home market was too faint to offer much encouragement to the cotton grower. In the closing years of the first half of the eighteenth century, the Swiss and German colonists in Georgia did raise some cotton which they manufactured into cloth and sold, but the report of their industry brought out from the trustees for establishing the colony, a letter to the president of the colony in Georgia, in which it was stated that "as to manufacturing the produce they [the colonists] raise, they must expect no encouragement from the trustees, for setting up manufactures which may interfere with those in England might occasion complaints here." The letter further advises the colonists to turn their attention to "the produce of silk, which they will receive immediate payment for."[1]

In the face of such opposition the domestic manufacture of cotton goods did not make much headway until the Revolutionary War cut off the imports of European manufactures and compelled the colonists to supply themselves with clothing.[2]

As respects the foreign markets, the trade of the colonists with the Continent had been prohibited by the Navigation Acts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and although it went on in spite of the legal restrictions, the risk which it underwent and the stationary character of the cotton industry of the Continental countries offered little encouragement to American plan-

[1] This letter, dated London, July 7, 1749, is quoted in Loughbridge's "Cotton Production in Georgia," pp. 53–54, Tenth Census of the U. S., Vol. VI.

[2] Ellison, "A Centennial Sketch," etc., 27.

ters to produce cotton for these markets. In Great Britain the chances of finding a vigorous demand and an expanding market for raw cotton were but little better. The spinning and weaving of cotton had been carried on in Great Britain, it is true, since late in the sixteenth or early in the seventeenth century. But the domestic manufacturers were unable to produce the soft muslins and beautiful "painted calicoes" which since 1631 had been imported into England from India and were so popular with the "fine ladies," including even the Queen herself.[1] Although the demand for this class of goods formed the basis of the later development of the British cotton industry, all efforts to fabricate all-cotton goods in England previous to the introduction of machinery proved futile. Associated with the manufacture of flaxen goods, and dependent upon the scanty supplies of linen warp which the weaver was able to secure from Germany and Ireland, dependent as well upon the meagre production of yarn which a weaver after trudging for miles was able to collect from the operators of the one-thread spinning wheels, the cotton industry made slow progress and the probability of finding a growing market in Great Britain was therefore not great. The British government, in its worship of the woolen industry, had not yet learned to appreciate the spinners and weavers of cotton, and seems to have made no recommendations nor to have offered any encouragements which might have induced the colonists to increase the production of the white staple. Even the silk industry had received more attention at the hands of the mother country, and repeated attempts were made to induce the colonists to establish it.[2]

[1] De Foe's *Weekly Review*, Jan. 31, 1708; quoted by Baines, 79.

[2] Bishop, "History of American Manufactures," (1864), I: 27–8, 31, 356–64.

The second cause which retarded cotton cultivation in America, was the difficulty which the early cultivators found in cleaning the seed and other impurities from the fibre. The British manufacturers could not make use of the cotton until it was cleaned. As late as 1787, Samuel Maverick and an Indian named Jeffrey, sent as an experiment, 300 pounds of seed cotton to England, but received word from their consignees that it was not worth producing, as it could not be separated from the seed.[1] The simple roller gins which were in use in some localities previous to the Revolution were of little value, as the seeds of the short staple cotton, which alone was then cultivated, clung too tenaciously to the fibre to admit of being removed by such simple means. The work of cleaning the cotton was, therefore, done by hand, the whole family usually engaging in this tedious operation as its members sat around the evening fire. Bishop says that the amount which one person could clean in this way was about one pound per day,[2] and it is said to have been customary in 1790 in Williamsburg county, South Carolina, for the cotton growers to require field laborers to clean four pounds of lint cotton per week, in addition to their other work.[3]

While cotton cleaning might have been profitable for India and other countries of the East, where labor could be employed for a mere pittance, this slow process of removing the seeds from the lint could scarcely have proved remunerative for the highly paid American labor, even when cotton sold at from 1*s.* to 2*s.* per pound.

The third obstacle which lay in the way of an early

[1] Harry Hammond, "Cotton Production in South Carolina," 14. Tenth Census of the United States. Vol. VI.

[2] "History of American Manufactures," I: 352.

[3] Harry Hammond, "Cotton Production in South Carolina," 14, Tenth Census of the United States, vol. VI. Seabrook, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

cultivation of cotton in the English colonies was the profits which accrued to the pre-revolutionary inhabitants from the cultivation of other crops. In Virginia the cultivation of tobacco was nearly as old as the colony itself, and despite the efforts of the mother country to divert the energies of the inhabitants to the raising of other commodities,[1] the tobacco trade was so lucrative that the culture of the plant almost monopolized the attention of the Virginians beyond what was necessary to produce the food for their own use. The average annual export of tobacco from all the colonies from 1699 to 1708 was 28,868,666 pounds, and from 1744 to 1766, 40,000,000 pounds; and three-fourths of the pre-revolutionary production of this staple was raised in Virginia.[2] "Previous to the American Revolution," says Pitkin, "it [tobacco] constituted in value between a quarter and one-third of all the exports of the American colonies, now the United States."[3] It is an interesting fact, however, that the year in which cotton was probably for the first time cultivated in Virginia with reference to its use in domestic manufacture (1661) was one during which there had been an overproduction of tobacco, and the colonists were deprived of a market in consequence of the Navigation Act of Charles II, (1660).[4] In North Carolina, the sparse population was for the most part engaged in forest or meadow pursuits, drawing pitch, tar and turpentine from the pine forests, or herding cattle and hogs.[5] Where the land was cultivated,

[1] Bolles, "Industrial History of the United States," 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, 92.
[3] Pitkin, "Statistical View of the United States," 109.
[4] McHenry, "The Cotton Trade," 9.
[5] Sartorius von Waltershausen, "Die Arbeitsverfassung der englischen Kolonien in Nord-Amerika," 24.

tobacco, as in Virginia, and rice, as in South Carolina, were the chief crops.

In South Carolina and Georgia the cultivation of rice and indigo engrossed the attention of the early inhabitants, who found the cultivation of both these commodities very profitable until the outbreak of the war with the mother country. One hundred thousand barrels of rice had been sent from South Carolina to England as early as 1724.[1] With a steady market for all these commodities, the colonists were not likely to be led into the cultivation of cotton, whose preparation for market required so much labor, and for which commodity there was so little demand.

But there was still a fourth hindrance to the cultivation of the fleecy staple in the North American possessions of Great Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Of the original thirteen states of the American Union, the only two which have become great cotton producing regions are South Carolina and Georgia. The latter was not settled until nearly the middle of the eighteenth century, and in both these colonies the population was almost entirely confined to the tidewater region, a strip of territory about eighty miles in width along the coast. By 1790 the population of the upper regions of South Carolina was about equal to that of the coast region, but almost all the inhabitants of the hill country had settled in that region since Braddock's defeat in 1755,[2] and most of them had not arrived until after the close of the Revolution. Although the tide-water region is the country that produces the famous sea island cotton, the most valuable of all cottons, this variety was not introduced into the United States until after the Revolu-

[1] Bolles, "Industrial History of the United States," 8.

[2] Mills, "Statistics of South Carolina," 177.

tion. The short staple cotton, the only kind cultivated in the United States previous to 1785, finds its cultivation chiefly carried on in the higher lands from which it gets its name, "upland cotton." The population of the back districts was too meagre to have produced any considerable quantity of this kind of cotton, even if its cultivation had proven profitable. It is for the above reasons that the cotton plant, although not unknown to the early settlers of the southern country, was but little esteemed by them during the colonial period of our history.

Undoubtedly the first stimulus given to cotton culture within what is now the United States, was furnished by the American Revolution. The cutting off of the supplies of clothing received from the mother country, coincident with the outbreak of hostilities, caused the colonists to endeavor to increase the manufacture of the homespun garments.[1] Perhaps only a small proportion of the clothing spun and woven by the revolutionary mothers and daughters was composed of cotton, but it was enough to stimulate the southern planters to experiment with the cultivation of the new staple. We have already noted the recommendation of the provincial assemblies of South Carolina and Virginia,[2] and although we have no proof that the recommendations of these assemblies were directly acted upon, they show that the importance of cotton culture was now being appreciated. By the end of the war we find numerous statements in the writings of the times which show that the cultivation of the staple had made considerable progress. Tench Coxe of Philadelphia, who has been called the "father of cotton culture in the

[1] Ellison, "A Centennial Sketch," etc., 27.

[2] Above, p. 6.

United States," said in 1785 that it was "his pleasing conviction that the United States in its extensive region south of Anne Arundel and Talbot (Maryland), would certainly become a great cotton producing country." In 1786 Madison said, in a conversation with Tench Coxe at the Annapolis convention,[1] that "there was no reason to doubt that the United States would one day become a great cotton producing country," and the same year Jefferson in a letter dated Paris, Aug. 15th, to M. de Warville, said, alluding to a reference made by the latter to the cotton manufacture in Massachusetts: "The four southernmost states make a great deal of cotton. Their poor are almost entirely clothed in it in winter and summer. In winter they wear shirts of it and outer clothing of cotton and wool mixed. In summer their shirts are linen, but the outer clothing cotton. The dress of the women is almost entirely of cotton manufactured by themselves, except the richer class, and even many of these wear a good deal of home spun cotton. It is as well manufactured as the calicoes of Europe. Those four states furnish a great deal of cotton to the states north of them, who cannot make as being too cold."[2]

But the war with the motherland had indirectly done more to foster the cultivation of cotton than merely stimulating the manufacture of cotton goods at home. It had broken down the connection between the parent country and her colonies, which had made the latter not only politically subordinate to the former, but likewise

[1] Seabrook, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

[2] Jefferson's Writings, edited by H. A. Washington, 1853, II: 12. See also opinions of Washington and Hamilton as to the probability of success in cotton raising. Quoted in Von Halle, "Baumwollproduktion und Pflanzungswirtschaft in den Nordamerikanischen Südstaaten," 20–21.

subject to the dictation of the motherland in the matter of what they should produce and where they should market it. The close of the war left the infant republic politically free and independent, and while its economic independence was not yet guaranteed, the results of the war rendered its achievement possible, and, indeed, compelled it. The southern colonies, in particular, had been dependent upon the British markets, not only for what they sold, but for what they purchased, and British merchants had even been to a large extent creditors of the southern planters. These colonies had also suffered most from the devastations of the war, for, in addition to the natural poverty of the South, it had never been free from the presence of the enemy, and guerilla warfare rendered almost impossible the raising of crops. Prosperous towns of Georgia, as Sunbury and Frederica, were at the close of the war entirely ruined. New Ebeneezer with its flourishing silk industry had ceased to exist.[1] The rice cultivation which had been carried on by slave labor along the coasts of the Carolinas and Georgia, had greatly declined, owing to the fact that so many of the negroes had been killed or carried off during the war. The crop of 1783 was less than one-half the average annual production at the beginning of the struggle,[2] and although the growth from this time on increased until 1792, it did not again approximate the prerevolutionary crops. Indigo, which before the war had been such a profitable crop, was so no longer, owing to the loss of a market. During the war the East Indies had made large shipments of this commodity to England, and as it could be produced there cheaper than in America, and Great Britain no longer had an interest in

[1] McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," II : 34.
[2] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II : 205.

buying from her revolted colonies, the loss of this staple became a permanent one.[1]

Farther north the culture of tobacco was declining, although the reason therefor was in no way connected with the military struggle between the countries. The reason for the decline lay in the fact that its culture had been carried on by means of a constant succession of cropping from the same land without rotation, and without the application of manures. Under such a system of cultivation the tobacco lands were speedily becoming exhausted. Jefferson, writing in his "Notes on the State of Virginia,"[2] in 1781, said that the culture of tobacco "was fast declining at the commencement of this war," and that "it must continue to decline on the return of peace." Among the "valuable substitutes when the cultivation of tobacco shall be discontinued," there will be, he adds, "cotton in the eastern part of the state, and hemp and flax in the western."[3] Although the production of tobacco did not show an immediate falling off for the total United States, the increase after the war came from the new lands of North Carolina and Kentucky, and especially of Georgia, where it became the staple crop for the few years following the Revolution.[4]

The immigrants from the North and from Europe that after the war began to pour into the upland regions of the southern states, were in want of a semi-tropical staple for cultivation, and turned their attention to the raising of wheat and Indian corn.[5] But wheat raising, although in the main successful, had some difficulties to

[1] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II: 212. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 32.

[2] First Edition, 1787, 278.

[3] *Ibid.*, 281.

[4] White, "Statistics of Georgia," 38.

[5] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II: 217.

contend with, especially the rust, which made it less suited to this region than to the North. Flouring mills had been established, however, in the West, and the wheat culture seemed likely to succeed.

Of even more importance to the cotton grower than the agricultural changes which had taken place in America, were those which had taken place in Great Britain in the methods of marketing and consuming the raw cotton. The first of these was the rise of a commercial class which took upon itself the responsibility of supplying the spinners and weavers with the raw materials, and found for these artisans a market for their finished products. This revolution in methods of trading had been completed by about 1760.[1] Close on its heels came the great inventions in the textile industries. The spinning-jenny, the water-frame, the self-acting mule, and the power-loom, in connection with the establishment of the factory system, so increased the possibility of production that they made the producer of the raw material responsible for the next great step in the economic development of the civilized nations.

The agriculturists of the southern portion of the new republic took upon themselves this responsibility of supplying a material for use by the new machinery, and their success has been no less marvelous than is the work of the architects of the Industrial Revolution.

The first event of importance in connection with the development of cotton culture in the United States, was the introduction of the long-staple or sea-island cotton into the country in the year 1786. The credit for this meritorious piece of work has been claimed for no less

[1] Brentano, "Ueber die Ursachen der heutigen socialen Noth." Schulze-Gaevernitz, "Der Grossbetrieb: Ein wirtschaftlicher und socialer Fortschritt. Eine Studie auf dem Gebiete der Baumwollindustrie," 27. [Translated under the title: "The Cotton Trade in England and on the Continent." 1894).

than three persons, and as the claim of all these rests on good evidence, we can only conclude that more than one person is responsible for introducing this species of cotton.

At the close of the American Revolution, England offered as a home to the loyalists the Bahama Islands. Among those who availed themselves of this privilege was Mr. Frank Levett, a native of Smyrna, Turkey, who came to this country to introduce a colony of Greeks. Being dissatisfied with the Bahamas, he returned to the United States after his property had been freed from the sequestration, and settled on one of the sea islands, probably Sapelo, lying off the coast of Georgia. Hither came in 1786 from Mr. Patrick Walsh, a friend of his, whom he had met in the Bahamas, "three large sacks of cotton seed." The seed, which was of the long staple variety, was from the growth of plants cultivated in the Bahamas, where they had been propagated from seed brought from the island of Anguilla, lying in the Caribbean Sea, and long famous for its excellent cotton wool. Mr. Levett seems not to have appreciated the gift, for in 1789 we find him writing to the donor that "being in want of the sacks for gathering in my provisions, I shook their contents on the dung-hill, and it happening to be a very wet season, in the spring a multitude of plants covered the place; these I drew out and transplanted into two acres of ground, and was highly gratified to find an abundant crop."[1]

[1] Letter of Mr. Patrick Walsh in the *American Farmer* for Dec. 31, 1830 (Vol. XI: 335). Claim of Mr. Levett disputed in a letter by Mr. Thos. Spalding in the *Georgian*, Jan. 31, 1831; reference in the *American Farmer*, XIII: 107. Seabrook (*Op. Cit.*, 15), says that the cotton seed sent by Walsh to Levett was of the "Pernambuco or kidney cotton," the cultivation of which was subsequently abandoned for the sea-island cotton.

The same year that Mr. Levett received the sea-island cotton seed, Gov. Tatnall, Col. Roger Kelsal and Mr. James Spalding, all natives of Georgia, received parcels of the seed from friends among the exiled loyalists living in the Bahamas. These gentlemen also planted the seed, and met with favorable results.[1] Mr. Levett sent the cotton which he raised to Simpson and Davison, in London. The cotton was not covered with cotton bagging, but was sent in rice casks. The firm advertised it, and some Glasgow manufacturers examined it and bought it for "something like 4*s.* 6*d.* per pound." These manufacturers soon after this came to London and inquired for more of the same kind. They said they had never seen any cotton so good, and promised to take all that Simpson and Davison could procure, and told them to inform their friends in America that there was no danger of overstocking the market.[2] By 1789 twenty persons were engaged in the cultivation of the sea-island cotton in Georgia.[3] The sea-island cotton was first cultivated in South Carolina in 1788, but its cultivation did not meet with success until 1790, and it was not extensively raised in this state until 1799.[5]

The advantages which the sea island cotton possesses over the short staple or upland variety are found in the length and strength of its fibres and in its silky character, which render it capable of being spun into long silky threads. It is chiefly used in the manufacture of thread

[1] Letter of Mr. Thos. Spalding. to the Savannah *Georgian*, April, 1828, quoted by Adiel Sherwood in "Gazeteer of Georgia," 1829, 261–6.

[2] W. W. Parrott in the "Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society," 1857, 222.

[3] Uré, "History of the Cotton Manufacture," I : 120. Dana, "Cotton from Seed to Loom." 23.

[5] Bishop, "History of American Manufactures," (1866), I: 355.

and lace, and in the weaving of the finer grades of cotton goods which are often put upon the market as being silk. It is more easily prepared for the market than other cottons, for its seeds cling less tenaciously to the fibre, and it is, therefore, satisfactorily cleaned by passing it through a simple roller gin. Valuable as is this variety of cotton, it soon attained what was for many years its maximum production. Until about 1840 it was cultivated exclusively on the sea islands and a narrow strip of the adjoining mainland running from about Charleston, South Carolina, to the mouth of the St. Johns river in Florida. All attempts to grow it at a considerable distance from the sea failed. Experiments made with a view of improving the quality of this cotton resulted so favorably that its price, which in 1790 varied from 10*d.* to two or three shillings per pound, in a few years became 90 cents to $1.25 per pound, and in one instance sold for $2 per pound.[1]

In addition to the requisites of soil and climate, the sea island cotton requires a greater diligence and knowledge of methods of cultivation than does the short staple, so that even within the above geographical limits its culture did not become universal.[2]

The success of the coast planters now led the residents of the hill country to try cotton raising on their lands. All attempts to raise the sea island cotton on the uplands were futile, but the short staple now began to be cultivated in all directions. But this upland cotton, although doubtless related to, and in many respects similar to that grown previous to and during the Revolution, still differed in important particulars from the latter variety. The cotton cultivated as a garden plant and for domestic

[1] Bishop, *Op. Cit.*, I: 355.
[2] Baines, 296. Uré, I: 113.

uses by the colonists in the tide-water region of the country from New Jersey to Georgia, was of a short staple variety, but had "a clean black seed, with fur at the end."[1] The cotton whose culture had after the Revolution been introduced on the uplands, was also short stapled, but had green instead of black seeds. These were more difficult to detach from the wool in which they were buried, but the fibre was strong and the wool had a much whiter appearance than either the sea island or the black-seeded, short staple cotton. On this account the planters believed that if it could be cleaned it would prove superior to all other kinds as a marketable commodity.

The extension of cotton culture at this period was largely due to the zealous advocacy of Tench Coxe, then assistant secretary of the Treasury Department at Philadelphia, and one of the strongest supporters of Hamilton's plan of protection for American infant industries. It was largely due to his influence that Congress, in order to protect the southern cotton growers, was led to impose in 1789, a duty of three cents a pound on the cotton of foreign growth, which the domestic manufacturers were still importing from Brazil and the West Indies.[2] The southern agriculturists were thus among the first to receive the benefits of the protective system inaugurated by the first Congress in 1789.

The production of cotton by the United States at this time is estimated by a later Secretary of the Treasury to have been one million pounds—presumably lint cotton.[3]

[1] Seabrook, "Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton," 15.

[2] Niles' Register, xxxii, 332. Bishop, "History of American Manufactures," (1866), I: 355.

[3] Levi Woodbury, Report on the Production and Consumption of Cotton in the United States, Executive Document, First Session, 14th Congress, No. 140, 46; reference to other authorities, 42.

Although there is nothing to indicate that this estimate was anything more than a rough guess, it probably was not extravagant. The estimate for the following year, 1790, was one and one-half million pounds, and for 1791, two million pounds. Three-fourths of this crop are supposed to have come from South Carolina, and the remainder from Georgia.[1]

Although the growing importance of cotton culture had been for some years appreciated by the southern statesmen, Jefferson and Madison, the northern statesman, Jay, had probably heard little concerning this infant southern industry. In the treaty of 1794 between Great Britain and the United States, which Jay as minister to the Court of St. James was instrumental in procuring, he allowed (Article XII) cotton to be included among the commodities which the ships of the United States were restrained from carrying "either from His Majesty's islands or from the United States to any part of the world except the United States."[2]

The Senate refused to ratify this article of the treaty, and it was suspended by agreement between the two countries.

Of the obstacles which lay in the way of a rapid expansion of cotton growing in America previous to the Revolution, all but one had now been removed. An expanding market at home and abroad invited the planter to send of the new staple a seemingly unlimited amount. The large profits which were reaped by the early cultivators of tobacco, rice and indigo had disappeared, and both the old planters and the recently arrived settlers of

[1] Levi Woodbury, report cited, 7.

[2] Treaties and Conventions between the United States and Other Powers, (1889), 386.

the back country were anxious to cultivate the new staple which promised to bring new fortunes to their long neglected land. But the difficulty of preparing the cotton for market was still to be met. Various attempts had already been made to solve this problem In India and other Asiatic countries there had been in use for centuries a small hand mill called the *churka*, which consisted of two upright posts on which was mounted a pair of rollers having longitudinal grooves and revolving nearly in contact.[1] Between these rollers the cotton was passed, the seeds, being too large to pass through, fell on the opposite side from the lint. The cotton was then cleaned from dirt by means of a vibrating bow, which opened the knots and shook out the dust.[2] Both of these tools had been introduced into America and applied to the cleansing of our cotton, and from the use of the bow is to be found the explanation of the term "Bowed Cotton",[3] still current on the markets. Modifications of the *churka* had also been attempted by M. Dubreuil of Louisiana in 1742,[4] by Mr. Crebs of West Florida in 1772,[5] by Kinsey Burden of South Carolina in 1778, by Mr. Bisset[6] of Georgia in 1788, and by Dr. Joseph Eve then of the Bahamas, but later of Georgia, in 1790.[7] This latter machine was designed to gin the short staple as well as the long staple. But although all of these gins met with more or less success in cleaning the sea-island cotton, from whose long straight staple the seeds were easily detached, none of them proved equal

[1] Baines, 66.
[2] *Ibid.*, 67.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Bishop, I : 351.
[5] *Ibid.*, 352–3.
[6] Called "Bissel" in "Handbook of South Carolina," 37.
[7] Seabrook, *Op. Cit.*, 34. "Handbook of South Carolina," 38.

to the task of cleaning the "green seed" or "upland cotton," the seeds of which were buried in its short and wooly fibre. It was therefore the sea island cotton whose cultivation met with such rapid expansion between 1786 and 1792. The cotton crops and exports for which we have statistical estimates from 1789 to 1793[1] must have been almost entirely of the long staple variety. Regarding exports, Pitkin says: "Scarcely a single pound of upland cotton was exported prior to the invention of the saw gin."[2] And it was clearly appreciated at the South that some effectual mode of separating the seeds from the lint of the short staple cotton must be devised before there could be any considerable increase in the production of this staple on the uplands. Phineas Miller, Eli Whitney's partner, says that in 1792, "the culture of the green seed cotton had just commenced as a crop in the upper country, and two or three million of pounds of this article had been raised and picked in from the field, but for the want of a suitable gin, but a small part of it had been prepared for market."[3] The project of inventing a machine for cleaning short staple cotton had for some time occupied the minds of the southern planters, and steps in that direction had already been taken. The state of Georgia had appointed a commission whose duty it was to endeavor to secure the invention and construction of such a machine.[4] It is quite probable that a number of persons may have been working on the problem, and it is not impossible that machines which performed the work more or less success-

[1] Report of Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, on Cotton Production, etc.

[2] Pitkin, "A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States."

[3] Letter from Miller to Paul Hamilton, Esq., Comptroller of the State of South Carolina. *American Historical Review*, Oct., 1897.

[4] D. A. Tompkins, "Cotton and Its Uses," *Manufacturers' Record*, Nov. 1, 1895, Supplement.

fully may have been produced previous to 1793.[1] But the first complete solution to the problem of how to separate the seeds from the fibre of the green seed cotton was undoubtedly that furnished by Eli Whitney, in the spring of 1793.

Brentano,[2] Schulze-Gaevernitz,[3] and Hobson,[4] have all called attention to the fact that great inventions are seldom the work of scientific men who have obtained their results through long and patient study, but are for the most part the achievements of practical men engaged in an industry whose processes are aided and simplified by the discoveries which they make. The inventions are usually the results of numerous experiments of perhaps many persons, and the real inventor has only combined in his discovery the previous experiments and achievements of his own and others. "Nearly all the great textile inventors were practical men, most of them operatives immersed in the details of their craft, brought face to face continually with some definite difficulty to be overcome, some particular economy desirable to make."[5] As an explanation for the majority of the inventions of mankind, this theory is doubtless adequate. The invention of the saw gin is, however, an exception to the rule, and is perhaps the best illustration of the old "heroic theory of invention" that can be found. It is true that Whitney was not a scientific man in the strict sense of that term. But his invention was not one of those chance discoveries, made by a laborer in the prosecution of his occupation, which Adam Smith[6] has called attention to as being the secret of many inventions.

[1] The roller gin of Joseph Eve was an effort in this direction.
[2] "Ueber die Ursachen der heutigen socialen Noth," 7 ff.
[3] "Der Grossbetrieb," 30.
[4] "Evolution of Modern Capitalism," 58.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] "Wealth of Nations," Book I, Chapter I.

The saw gin was the work of a man not engaged in any capacity in the industry for which his machine was intended, and who was not even familiar, except at second hand, with the then existent methods of cleaning cotton and their deficiencies. At the time he began work on his invention he confessed "that he had never seen either cotton or cotton seed in his life."[1]

Whitney was rather an example of the close observation, quick perception and sudden application of an idea, which have made the term Yankee synonymous with inventive genius the world over. He was a Massachusetts boy, whose distaste for farming and aptitude for handling tools had led to his employment during the Revolutionary struggle in the business of nail making, then carried on by hand.[2] At the close of the war he determined to secure a liberal education, and after considerable difficulty he secured the necessary funds and entered Yale College. Here the mechanical powers of the country artisan were trained for higher tasks than the repairing of fiddles and the making of hat pins and walking canes. Completing his college course in 1792, Whitney journeyed southward, intending to teach a private school in South Carolina.[3] On his way south he formed the acquaintance of Mrs. Greene, the widow of Major-General Nathaniel Greene, and was by her invited to spend a few days at her home, Mulberry Grove, near Savannah, Georgia. It was here that his attention was first called to the subject of cotton ginning, by hearing some gentlemen from the upper part of the state, where cotton culture was just beginning, discuss the need of a machine for cleaning the green seed or short staple cotton,

[1] Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 14.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Letter of Eli Whitney to his father, *American Historical Review*, October, 1897.

and thus making this variety of cotton valuable as a marketable commodity. While thinking over the matter, Whitney was urged by Phineas Miller, the agent of the executors of the estate of General Greene, to make an effort to invent a machine which should subserve the above purpose. He himself offered to be at the entire expense of the undertaking, and Whitney rather reluctantly began work. Within ten days he had "made a small, though imperfect model."[1] The cotton was to be fed through a wire grating or latticed breast work, to a cylinder studded with wire teeth or "annular saws." This cylinder being turned, the teeth on passing between the wires of the grating, would grasp the cotton and pull the lint through, while the seeds being too large to pass between the wires would fall down on the opposite side from the cylinder. But there remained one difficulty to be overcome. The cotton accumulated on the teeth of the cylinder and clogged it so that the teeth could not pass between the wires of the grating. Whitney was at a loss to know how to overcome this difficulty, when a chance suggestion from Mrs. Greene, offered more in jest than in earnest, revealed to him the method by which the obstacle might be removed. Being a witness to his fruitless efforts to disengage the cotton from the teeth of the cylinder, this lady picked up the hearth brush and laughingly remarked, "Why don't you use this?" Filled with a new idea, Whitney returned to his work and added to his machine another roller studded with stiff hog bristles and revolving contiguous to, but in an inverse direction, to the other cylinder. This sufficed to sweep away the particles of cotton as they were ginned, and the saw gin in all its essential features

[1] Letter from Whitney to Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 24, 1793. Quoted by Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 17.

the same as those still in use, was an accomplished fact. The first gin large enough for practical use was completed in April, 1793. It was a small affair, having a cylinder only 26 inches in length and six inches in diameter, and was turned by hand. Nevertheless, with it a negro was able to clean fifty times as much as a man could do in the old fashioned way.[1]

Being himself without means for engaging in the manufacture of gins, Mr. Whitney entered into a copartnership with Phineas Miller, now the husband of Mrs. Greene, in May, 1793. Mr. Miller advanced the first funds required in their undertaking, and was to share equally in the returns from their enterprise.

Unfortunately for themselves, they selected an unhappy mode of conducting their business. Instead of confining their energies to the manufacture and sale of cotton gins, Miller and Whitney proposed to monopolize also the business of ginning. Cotton gins were constructed by them and set up at various points in the South. The cotton in the seed was either bought outright by them, or the planters were compelled to give one-third of the cotton in return for having it ginned. By 1796 Miller and Whitney had thirty gins in eight different places in the state of Georgia.[2] Some of these were run by water power, and others were turned by horses or oxen. But the opposition of the people to monopolies, led in this case by Gov. James Jackson of Georgia, who urged the legislature to either pay moderate compensation to the patentees, or to suppress the patent;[3] the impossibility of supplying in the

[2] Letter of Whitney to Thomas Jefferson, Nov. 24, 1793, *Loc. Cit.*, 17.

[2] Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 23.

[3] A reply to the Governor's message, by Miller and Whitney, appears in the *Columbian Museum and Savannah Advertiser*, Dec. 23, 1800.

above way the demands of the people for cotton gins, and worse than all, the open infringement of their patent, made this part of the scheme of Miller and Whitney a complete failure. Before they could obtain a patent (March 14, 1794), and even within two months after the completion of the original gin, the history of the invention of the Hargreaves spinning jenny was repeated on this side of the Atlantic. Unable to restrain their curiosity and avarice, the populace broke into the little shop at Mulberry Grove at night and carried off the machine.[1] Surreptitious copies of the gin now appeared in various portions of Georgia and South Carolina, and competed so successfully with Miller and Whitney's patent gins that there was little left for the latter to do.[2]

In constructing the first gin Whitney had devised several methods of affixing the teeth to the cylinders. His original intention was to cut the teeth in sheet iron in the form of saws, but he was unable to find the sheet iron in Savannah. He therefore made the teeth for his first machine of wire. In the model gin which he deposited in the patent office the teeth were, however, made in the form of saws as originally proposed.[3] Advised by his New England friends that the gins with the wire teeth left the cotton in better shape than did those with the saws, Whitney constructed his first gins intended for use in the South as he had the original one, with wire teeth. The saws being much easier to

[1] Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 16.

[2] *Ibid.*, 27.

[3] *Southern Agriculturist*, August, 1832. The sketch of Eli Whitney contained in this number of the *Agriculturist* was written by William Scarborough, Esq., who obtained his facts concerning the Whitney invention from Doctor Lemuel Kollock, the friend and family physician of Mr. Miller and family. A copy of this article is in the collection of Whitney manuscripts loaned to the author by Eli Whitney, of New Haven, Conn.

make and attach, however, the tresspassers on his patent right equipped their gins with saws. The principle was the same and the results it seems should have been the same. But for some reason the saws proved more popular. The English manufacturers for a time refused to buy the cotton ginned by Whitney's machines.[1] The users of the saw gins seem from the first to have had better success in disposing of the cotton thus ginned than those who used the patent gins.[2] Whether or not this was due to any real superiority of the saws over the wire teeth it now seems impossible to determine. Whitney constantly denied it, and the New England manufacturers substantiated his assertion.[3] After a year or so the English manufacturers also accepted the cotton cleaned by the patent gins.

But the infringers on the Whitney patent continued to lay great stress on the supposed improvement which they claimed they had made on the original machine by substituting saws for wire teeth. One of the trespassers, Hogden Holmes, of South Carolina, applied for and actually secured a patent on a gin equipped with these saws. This patent was soon set aside by the courts, but the trespasser continued to make and operate his gins, and occasioned Miller and Whitney endless trouble.[4] A

[1] Ellison, "A Centennial Sketch," etc., 16.

[2] Letter of Miller to Whitney, Sept. 28, 1797, *American Historical Review*, October, 1897.

[3] Recommendations of Whitney's gin and the cotton cleaned by it, from New England manufacturers, are found in the *Southern Sentinel and Gazette of the State* (Augusta, Ga.), Nov. 12, 1795, as well as in other southern newspapers.

[4] Holmes' patent was issued May 12, 1796. The original parchment copy of the letters patent is in the library of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston. A copy of it has been furnished me by Mr. W. D. Aiken, of Princeton, N. J., a great grandson of Holmes. The Holmes patent was set aside by the courts in Nov., 1802 (see Miller's letter to Hamilton, *American Historical Review*, Oct., 1897),

defective patent law and the difficulty of securing impartial jurors for years prevented the patentees from securing a judgment against the trespassers in the Federal courts. Not until 1807 was a judgment handed down in favor of Whitney, now the only surviving member of the firm.[1] From Georgia, which has probably reaped greater returns from the use of the cotton gin than any other of the cotton states, nothing was ever received by Whitney for his invention. The South Carolina legislature in 1801 agreed to pay Miller and Whitney $50,000. for the right to a free use of the gin in that state. The next session of the legislature, influenced by a belief that Holmes and not Whitney was the real inventor of the saw gin, repealed the law voting the appropriation to Miller and Whitney. Convinced of its mistake, the law was again made operative at the succeeding session, and the money paid.[2] North Carolina and Tennessee laid a tax on the cotton gins within their borders, the proceeds of which were to go to the patentees.[3] About $12,000, it is said, was raised in North Carolina in this way,[4] but little or nothing was received from Tennessee, where the payment of the tax was suspended by action of the legislature.[5] The funds received by the inventor from the states of North and South Carolina were entirely expended in contesting his patent rights in Georgia, and the entire returns from his invention no

and subsequently injunctions were issued against the use of his machine. See Fessenden, "Essay on Patents," (1810), Whitney vs. Fort, and Whitney vs. Carter, pp. 130, 134. A copy of the judge's decision in the latter case has been furnished me by Mr. Philip P. Wells, Librarian of the Yale University Law Library.

[1] Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 39-41.

[2] *Ibid.*, 30-34.

[3] *Ibid.*, 31.

[4] Letter of Mr. D. A. Tompkins, of Charlotte, N. C., to the writer, Dec. 12, 1895.

[5] Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 32.

more than sufficed to pay him for his outlay of time and money in the prosecution of his claims for justice.[1]

But if the inventor failed to reap his reward from the invention, his countrymen, especially those in the South, did not fail to profit by it. The last obstacle to the cultivation of the green seed cotton having been removed, the culture of this species spread rapidly on the uplands. Hitherto the British manufacturers had complained of the dirty condition in which American cotton came upon the market, but after the invention of the saw gin American cotton steadily grew in favor. In 1793 the exports of cotton from the United States fell short of half a million pounds. Seven years later sixteen million pounds were sent to Great Britain alone, and only five years later over one-half of the cotton arriving in the latter country came from the United States.

The culture of this staple almost monopolized the attention of the South Carolina and Georgia planters. In the tide water region of these states, the culture of the sea-island cotton displaced that of indigo, and checked for some years the extension of the rice culture.[2] The population of the back country, which since the war had been meeting with success in the growing of the cereals, now abandoned them for cotton, and the recently erected grist mills were left standing idle.[3] Indian corn, which in 1792 had been exported from South Carolina to the extent of nearly one hundred thousand bushels, soon had

[1] Olmsted, "Memoirs of Eli Whitney, Esq," 70, note 3. For a full account of Whitney's invention, his efforts to protect his patent rights in the South, see the author's article, "Correspondence of Eli Whitney relative to the Invention of the Cotton Gin," in the *American Historical Review*, October, 1897.

[2] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II: 205.

[3] *Ibid.*, 417.

to be imported for domestic use.[1] Tobacco, hemp, flax, barley and silk had all been articles of export from South Carolina and Georgia, but their cultivation was abandoned, and "King Cotton" reigned supreme. Ramsay wrote of it in 1808: "It has trebled the price of land suitable to its growth, and when the crop succeeds and the market is favorable, the annual income of those who plant it is double to what it was before the introduction of cotton."[2]

But aside from its effects upon the agricultural economy of the southern states, the introduction and spread of cotton culture exercised a profound influence upon the political and social life of the inhabitants. In South Carolina the political policy of the state had long been guided by the large rice planters along the coast whose commercial interests and residence in Charleston had led them to favor the Federal party, then in control of the national government. There was little intercourse between the old settlers along the coast and the purely agricultural people of the back country, and such as there was showed plainly that a feeling of hostility existed between the two sections. The western people were opposed to the Federalist policy and measures, but property qualifications and their own poverty prevented them from gaining the political control in the state. The spread of cotton culture in both the tide water region and the hill country turned the attention of the eastern residents to agriculture, and at the same time increased the wealth and number of the western population. Mutual interests developed, and fostered the growth of a strong state feeling, binding the two sections together in a united opposition to protective tariffs and in

[1] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II: 218.
[2] *Ibid.*, 214.

a common defense of their labor system. For in no way was the importance of the growing cotton industry shown in so striking a manner as in its influence on the maintenance and extension of slavery. Nothing else did so much to perpetuate this form of labor in the United States, and nothing else offered such strong arguments for its continuance. Cotton and slavery are the leading subjects in the economic history of the southern states during the succeeding sixty years, and to a study of their relation to each other we shall turn our attention in the following chapter.

CHAPTER II.

THE INFLUENCE OF COTTON IN THE PRESERVATION AND EXTENSION OF SLAVERY.[1]

The close relationship which existed between slavery and the culture of cotton was a fact clearly appreciated at the South previous to 1860, but the nature of the connection was generally misunderstood. Southern statesmen and writers were fond of asserting that not only the culture of cotton and the prosperity of their own section were dependent upon slave labor, but that the entire cotton industry of both Europe and America, and the material welfare of a large proportion of the civilized inhabitants of both continents, were alike dependent on the continuance of slavery in the southern states.

The three decades which have elapsed since the close of the Civil War, during which time the growth of cotton has attained a magnitude unparalleled by any period antecedent to emancipation, have forever dispelled the idea that the existence of the cotton industry was in any way, except by force of circumstances, dependent upon the labor of the negro slave. But it still remains to be seen that the connection between slavery and cotton growing at the South was not merely an accidental phenomenon, and that while cotton was not necessarily

[1] Since this chapter was written, two works have appeared in which the relation between cotton and slavery has been considered at some length : W. E. B. DuBois, "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America, 1638–1870," Harvard Historical Monographs, No. I, (1896), and Ernst von Halle, "Baumwollproduktion und Pflanzungswirtschaft in den Nordamerikanischen Südstaaten," Erster Teil, "Die Sklavenzeit," Schmoller's Staats- und socialwissenschaftliche Forschungen, Band XV, Heft I. (1897).

dependent upon slave labor, its culture furnished slavery the leading role in the great historical drama which culminated with the Civil War.

For the origin of slavery in the United States, it is true that cotton was in no degree responsible. Slave labor had been a prominent feature of the industrial life of the English North American colonies for a century and a half before it had occurred to anyone to employ negro labor in the cultivation of the cotton plant, or before it had even become apparent that cotton was to become one of the leading products of the southern states. To the colonial policy pursued by the great commercial nations, England and Holland, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, must be referred the explanation of the introduction of the "peculiar institution" into the territory now covered by the United States. For the building up of prosperous agricultural colonies on the Western Hemisphere, which should furnish food and raw materials to the inhabitants of the mother country, and which should constitute a market for home manufactures, cheap labor seemed a necessity. The transporting of negroes from Africa to America thus served the double purpose of giving employment to the merchant shipping of the motherland and supplying the colonists with laborers for cultivating their fields.

In the northern colonies the climate and the social and industrial habits of the people made slave labor a thing lightly esteemed, and the importation of slaves met with some opposition in this region.[1] But in the

[1] Von Waltershausen, "Arbeitsverfassung der englischen Kolonien in Nord-Amerika," 103; Hill, "Colonial Tariffs," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, VII: 91 ff.

Of the 58,500 negroes in the English colonies in 1714, only 12,150 were in the North, forming only 5.56 per cent. of the total population of this section. The 46,700 blacks in Virginia, Maryland, and the

South there were many circumstances, both in the nature of the environment and the character and habits of the people, which favored the employment of the negro slaves. The southern landowners were often the sons of the English landed gentry, more accustomed to entrust their estates to hired overseers, than themselves to till the soil. The land was usually taken up in the form of large holdings, thus permitting an organization and combination of labor on a large scale. The climate was favorable to the negroes, and the short and mild winters rendered outdoor labor possible during the entire year. It was in the South, also, that the servile white classes, known as "redemptioners," "indentured servants," or "servants sold for the custom," were most numerous, and the transition from white serfdom to negro slavery, was an easy one, and one that proved advantageous to the master. It cost less to maintain the negro than it did the white man, and the authority of the master was absolnte in the case of the former, while this does not seem to have been the case with regard to the white servants, who frequently revolted.[1] There were also certain advantages for negro slavery to be found in the nature of the southern crops and their methods of cultivation. Tobacco, the staple of the uplands, particularly of Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina, was a plant whose culture was well adapted to slave labor, for the small number of acres which could be cultivated by a single person made possible the grouping of a large number of hands under the supervision of a single over-

Carolinas, on the other hand, comprised 56.93 per cent. of the total population of these colonies. By 1790 the negro population of the North was only 2.05 per cent. of the total population, while in the South the proportion of blacks had not materially altered from that of 1714.

[1] Tourmagne, "Histoire de l'Esclavage," 315.

seer. The cultivation was of a comparatively simple order, and permitted the employment of an entire family, for the women and children could be employed in picking the worms off the plants, or in gathering the leaves, while the men performed the more difficult tasks.[1] On the low lands, along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, indigo and rice were the leading crops cultivated during colonial and revolutionary days. The cultivation of both these staples required severe labor and in this semi-torrid region with its malaria-tainted atmosphere the white man could not perform the work.[2] The planters who owned the rice lands spent the year in Charleston, leaving the estates in the charge of overseers. Slavery had its strongest hold upon this region, and is more easily to be justified here than anywhere else in the country.[3]

But in spite of the undoubted advantages which southern agriculture possessed for slave labor, a study of the economic condition of the South at the close of the Revolution does not show us that the advantage was a reciprocal one. It is true that of the ravages of the war, the South had received more than its due share, owing to the almost continuous presence of the enemy and the incessant guerilla warfare which was being waged. Yet the tardiness with which this section recovered from the disasters of the war is in marked contrast to the rapid increase in the wealth and prosperity of the northern states, where manufactures were springing up, commerce was expanding and the change in the agricultural methods was completely altering the aspect

[1] Cairnes, "The Slave Power," 41.

[2] Von Halle, "Baumwollproduktion und Pflanzungswirtschaft in den Nordamericanischen Südstaaten," Erster Teil, 31.

[3] Rhodes, "History of the United States," I: 1 ff.

of the country.[1] A close examination shows that the active labor which was so largely responsible for this progress at the North, was lacking at the South. Immigrants from Europe were not attracted to its fertile lands, but preferred to go where, if the land was less fertile, their labor was more respected. Of the whites in the South, the large landed proprietors and their sons seldom engaged in manual labor,[2] although the exhausted fields, deserted towns, poor roads and inns, indebtedness of the land holding classes, and the general lack of prosperity witnessed by all travelers, ill accorded with the leisure, luxurious habits, and the pride and arrogance affected by the large planters. The lower classes of whites were even less likely to prove the foundation of an industrious yeomanry. With evil antecedents, and with labor in disgrace, they were but a thriftless class, never working except under stress of hunger, and spending their time in sleeping and in lounging around the taverns. The negro slave had no example of thrift and industry furnished him, and had no reason for profiting by such an example had one been furnished. He easily fell into wasteful habits of agriculture, doing as little as possible to save his back from the lash, happy in the sense of owning nothing and feeling no responsibility.

The effect of cultivating the land by means of slave labor had been rapidly to deteriorate the soil. This had been especially marked on the tobacco plantations of Virginia. The difficulty of teaching the slave new processes led to the cultivation of tobacco as a single crop,

[1] Hildreth, "Despotism in America," 127–8.

[2] "No man will labor for himself who can make another labor for him. This is so true that of the proprietors of slaves, a very small proportion, indeed, are ever seen to labor." Jefferson, "Notes on Virginia," p. 40.

and the abandonment of the fields when they ceased to be profitable for tobacco culture.[1] As any system of manuring then practiced demanded a rotation of crops in order to obtain the food supply for the cattle, this artificial process of restoring fertility was also excluded, and was not appreciated if it had been understood. Even Jefferson claimed that manuring was not necessary to good husbandry in Virginia, "because we can buy an acre of new land cheaper than we can manure an old one."[2]

Slavery had apparently taken deep root on the rice and indigo plantations of the Carolinas and Georgia. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney said in the Constitutional Convention, that so long as there remained one acre of swamp land uncleared in South Carolina, he would raise his voice against restricting the importation of negroes, for he was "thoroughly convinced [that] the nature of our climate, and the flat, swampy situation of our country, obliges us to cultivate our lands with negroes, and that without them South Carolina would soon be a desert waste."[3] But even in this region there were circumstances which threatened to weaken slavery. Indigo, which in colonial days had been such a profitable crop, had by 1790 almost ceased to be cultivated. Rice, then grown on the higher coast lands was cultivated as a single crop, and when the fields became so overgrown with grass and weeds that their cultivation was difficult, they were abandoned and new lands were taken up.[4]

[1] See Washington's letter to Arthur Young, describing the methods of cultivating the soil in Virginia. Washington's Writings, edited by W. C. Ford, XI: 178; also X: 468; XII: 222–24, note; XIII: 328, 406. See also Jefferson's Writings, edited by H. A. Washington, IV: 3–5. Cf. Bruce, "Economic History of Virginia," *passim.*

[2] Jefferson's Writings, IV: 4.

[3] Elliot's Debates (1876), IV: 263. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 31.

[4] DeBow, "Industrial Resources of the South and West," II: 398.

Doubtless the entire rice lands, would soon have been exhausted had it not been discovered early in the present century that rice could be more profitably grown on the swamp lands. By overflowing these lands at the proper season, a process easily performed, the weeds were killed and a rich mould deposited, which manured the land and thus prevented exhaustion.[1] But even allowing for the undoubted advantages which negro labor possessed for the cultivation of the land in this region, it is evident that the culture of indigo and rice could not have sufficed to spread slavery throughout the South. The migrating people from Pennsylvania who began to fill up the back regions of the Carolinas and Virginia at the close of the Revolution, showed no tendency to adopt slavery,[2] and they began raising the cereals, for whose cultivation slave labor was of little profit. Tobacco, the only slave product cultivated on the uplands, when cultivated as a single crop caused a too rapid impoverishment of the soil to admit of a lengthy maintenance of slavery by an extension of its culture. And the adoption of a system of mixed farming was impossible under slave labor, for the slave lacked the intelligence and the interest in his work which is necessary for learning new processes in an industry of a diversified character.

The disastrous effects of the cultivation of the soil by slave labor were not unappreciated by the intelligent planters of the colonial and revolutionary days. Many of the southern statesmen—and the southern statesmen were all large planters and the most progressive agriculturists of the South—saw the disadvantages to agricul-

[1] Mills, "Statistics of South Carolina," 386.

[2] In 1790 the upper portion of South Carolina had a white population of 87,500, and a slave population of only 17,500. The lower and middle regions of this state had a white population of 54,000, and a slave population of 90,000.

ture of the slave system, and looked hopefully forward to the early extinction of this species of labor.

Washington,[1] Jefferson,[2] Madison,[3] George Mason, the Randolphs, Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee all opposed slavery in principle and favored its early extinction. Farther south the economic evils of slavery were less apparent, and the majority of the people, in the tide-water region at least, doubtless shared the opinion expressed by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney.[4] Yet, even in the extreme South, slavery was not always considered a blessing. In the first congress a representative from Georgia said that there was not a man in the state who did not wish that there were no slaves. "They are a curse to the country."[5] Later writers, including the warmest advocates of slavery, have acknowledged that the economic conditions of the South near the end of the last century threatened to put an end to this institution. McHenry, who certainly did not underestimate the advantages of slave labor, wrote as follows:[6] "It is fortunate for the blacks as well as the whites, that the cotton business sprang up, for the sons of Africa do not flourish in a state of freedom, and without the cultivation of the leading staple of commerce there would not have been sufficient occupation for them. The planters would have preferred to manumit their slaves, which, in fact, was done, rather than be encumbered with idle and superfluous hands."

[1] Washington's Writings, edited by W. C. Ford, XIV: 196. See also his letter to LaFayette, and Mr. Ford's note on Washington's agricultural correspondence, XII: 222–224.

[2] Jefferson's Writings, edited by H. A. Washington, IX: 290. See also his letter to M. de Warville, II: 357.

[3] Writings of James Madison, IV: 278.

[4] Above, p. 39.

[5] McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," II: 359

[6] McHenry, "The Cotton Trade," 12.

The fact that slavery was a weakening institution is shown by the decline in the value of slaves. Outside the rice region, their holding was becoming unprofitable. In 1790 the best hands could be purchased for two hundred dollars a head.[1] The acquisition of Louisiana, and the consequent opening up of new lands, might have delayed emancipation for a while, but there is little reason to doubt that, outside the tide-water region of the Carolinas and Georgia, the economic disadvantages of slavery were becoming so apparent and a feeling that the maintenance of the institution was contrary to the ethical standards of the country was becoming so strong, that voluntary emancipation or legislative action on the part of the states would soon have eradicated this species of labor. On the coast lands where rice was profitably cultivated, slavery would perhaps have continued until the growing population in the western portions of the states gained the political control, or until action on the part of the people at large had suppressed it.

But the movement towards emancipation was checked by the discovery that cotton could be profitably cultivated throughout the whole southern country. The introduction of the sea-island variety furnished the planters of the coast region with a means of recuperating their broken fortunes, and the invention of the saw-gin made possible the extension of cotton culture to the uplands. "The spread of cotton culture into the interior of the South finally broke down the contrast between the 'tide-water' region and the rest of the State and based southern interests on slavery."[2] Side by side slavery and cotton pushed westward into the "back

[1] McHenry, "The Cotton Trade," 80.

[2] F. J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Annual Report of American Historical Association, 1895, p. 220.

country" of the Carolinas, across the pine hills and prairies of Georgia and Alabama, took complete possession of the alluvial lands along the Mississippi and Red rivers, and by 1860 were laying claim to the great central region of Texas.

Before considering at length the expansion of slavery and cotton culture, let us note the conditions to a profitable use of slave labor, and see how cotton conformed to these conditions.

1. We may mention as a first requisite to the profitable employment of slave labor, simplicity of occupation. It is because of the limitations set by this condition that we find in all countries where negro slavery has met with success, that the industry of the people has been devoted to agriculture. The skill and dexterity which is necessary for carrying on manufacturing operations, and the intelligent self-interest demanded by mercantile and commercial pursuits, were lacking in the slave, for there was no hope of reward to stimulate his activities. The South was not lacking in opportunities for carrying on manufacturing and commercial pursuits. "Other conditions being the same, the manufacture of a raw material will always be carried on in the neighborhood where the material is produced."[1] The almost inexhaustible coal fields and deposits of iron ore, to say nothing of the raw cotton produced, gave the South splendid facilities for manufacturing; and her wide rivers with their gentle currents offered opportunities for trading far superior to other sections which soon outstripped this region in both manufactures and commerce. The South had originally taken the lead in developing manufactures. "Even as late as 1810, according to the United States census for

[1] Von Holst "Constitutional History of the United States," I: 344, note.

that year, the manufactured products of Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia, exceeded in variety and value those of all New England. While the production of cotton remained profitable, the growth of slavery stifled manufactures, and that interest steadily declined."[1] But even within agriculture itself there was a further limitation set to slavery. Slave labor could be employed in the cultivation of only one crop, or of crops whose methods of culture were almost identical. The negro could learn in a purely mechanical way how to plant, cultivate and harvest a crop of sugar cane, cotton or tobacco, but he could not, under slavery, acquire the knowledge and technique necessary for carrying on a diversified system of farming. The cultivation of cotton is perhaps no simpler than that of many other agricultural staples, but it is raised in a climate more congenial to the negro, and its culture is of such a nature that the entire family of the slave could be employed in performing many operations, such as thinning the rows or gathering the lint, whereas the labor of the women and children would be of little profit in the cultivation of many other staples. Very few tools and no machines were used in the cultivation of this plant. Previous to 1860 the planting was mainly done by hand; "chopping cotton" was done by means of a hoe; this same implement was largely used in the cultivation, and the harvesting of this staple has always been done without the use of either tools or machinery.

2. As the "one crop cultivation"[2] of the soil under

[1] D. A. Tompkins, "Cotton and Its Uses," *Manufacturers' Record*, XXVIII, Nov. 1, 1895, Supplement, p. 1.

[2] By the use of the term "one crop cultivation," I do not mean to imply that cotton was the only crop grown in the cotton belt. Large quantities of Indian corn were raised. But both of these staples were "summer crops," or "hoed crops," cultivated in a very similar man-

the slave system eventually results in a wearing out of the land, a second condition to the use of slave labor is the existence of new and fertile lands which can be brought under cultivation as the old fields become exhausted. There were two advantages which cotton possessed over the other slave crops, tobacco, sugar cane and rice, in meeting this condition to the expansion and perpetuation of slavery. The first advantage lay in the fact that the cultivation of these latter staples was limited to a comparatively small area, demanding certain conditions of soil and climate which prevented the extension of their culture over a wide extent of territory. Cotton, on the other hand, could be grown on almost all the tillable lands of the South, and even when limited to the most fertile of these lands, found a wide expanse open to it. Still it was the unavoidable limitations of these fertile lands that acted as the chief motive impelling the South to demand an extension of the national domain. The second advantage which cotton possessed over other crops grown in the South, was that in spite of the exhaustion of the soil which its cultivation as a single crop eventually brought about, it was of a less exhaustive nature than its competing staples, especially tobacco, the only other slave crop grown on the uplands. Especially when the cotton seed was returned to the soil for the purpose of fertilization, the cultivation of this staple might proceed for a considerable number of years before it resulted in a complete wearing out of the land.

3. Steadiness of employment is a third condition to the profitable use of slave labor. The slave represents

ner. A rotation of these crops was, therefore, of little advantage according to the rule laid down by the old "three-field" system of cultivation.

to his master not only labor but capital. The hired laborer in his idle moments is no burden to his employer, for he must furnish his own means of subsistence. Wages must of course cover the means of subsistence for the entire year, but this does not bind any particular employer to maintain the laborer for this entire period. The wage earner can enter some other occupation or hire his services to some other employer. But the slave owner was obliged to keep up the working powers of the negro during the entire year, and required therefore some employment which would allow him to make an almost steady use of his property. Now there are few agricultural staples whose cultivation requires so continuous an employment of labor for so long a time as does cotton. The culture of the plant spreads itself over three-fourths of the year, and there is little of this time when labor is not in some way being employed in its cultivation. And even the small portion of the year in which the slaves were not actually employed in the cotton fields, they were not idle, for the need of new cotton lands led to their employment during the mild winters of the cotton belt in clearing new fields.

4. A fourth condition to the employment of slaves is a cheap and easy means of subsistence. Slave labor is less efficient than free labor, and cannot be rewarded so highly. The warm climate of the cotton belt allowed the negro to live in comparative comfort with but little outlay on the part of his master for shelter and fuel. Corn and bacon formed the two leading items in the negro's bill of fare, and as corn cultivation was almost always associated with that of cotton, and supplied the wants of both the slave and the hog, food supply was a thing easily obtained. It has been estimated by some

agricultural writers in the cotton belt that fifteen dollars would cover the average cost of keeping a slave for an entire year.[1]

5. Organization of labor on a large scale is a fifth condition to the use of slave labor. That the slave whose only impulse to labor is fear of punishment, requires supervision is evident at first glance. But as the labor of the superintendent or overseer must be free, and must be rewarded with comparatively high wages, it is obvious that, other things being equal, that production will be the cheapest which permits of the least superintendence. Four or five slaves working on a small farm require the same supervision that fifteen or twenty would on the large plantation. As a single laborer can cultivate successfully only from five to ten acres of cotton, while in Indian corn, for example, he can cultivate thirty or forty acres, it is obvious that laborers can be more compactly massed, and more of them brought under the eye of a single overseer in the cotton fields, than when they are employed in cultivating corn. The advantage of cotton is still greater in this respect, when compared with such crops as wheat, rye and the grasses. It is largely due to this condition that cotton came to be cultivated chiefly on the large plantations.[2]

The advantages which the cotton culture possessed for the employment of the negroes soon made themselves apparent to both the slave-holder and non-slaveholder of the South, and there began a rapid transference of the blacks from the cultivation of other crops to the cotton fields of South Carolina and Georgia. The farmers of the northern states were enabled to sell their

[1] De Bow, "Industrial Resources of the South and West," I: 150, 162.

[2] Von Holst, *Op. Cit.*, I: 342.

slaves, who had become an expensive burden to them, to the cotton planters of the South. Even then the demand for slaves did not cease, and the exhausted tobacco plantations of Virginia and Maryland were next called upon to give up their black cultivators to the snow-white fields of the cotton states.

Outside of the rice districts the slave population of the southernmost states had not been a large one when the invention of the cotton gin gave an impetus to cotton culture in these states. The upper and middle regions of South Carolina, where the cotton lands of this state are chiefly found, contained only about 28,000 slaves in 1790, and in the entire state of Georgia the number of slaves was but little larger than that of New York. Maryland and Virginia had nearly three-fifths of all the slaves then in the United States.

The first extension of cotton culture was to the hill country of South Carolina and Georgia. The cultivation of grains in this region ceased, and the fields were surrendered to "King Cotton." As late as 1821 these two states produced more than one-half the cotton grown in the country.[1] The slave population of the hill country was soon larger than the white population, although in 1790 the whites in this region had outnumbered the blacks four to one.

But after a quarter of a century of cotton culture in this region had passed, it became evident that the uplands were becoming exhausted. Agricultural writers and speakers besought the planters to change their methods of cultivation; to adopt a rotation of crops; to raise stock in order to secure manure for the worn fields, and especially to plant less cotton and to produce their own food, which of late years many planters had im-

[1] Woodbury, Report on Cotton Production and Consumption, 13.

ported from the North and West.[1] But the difficulty of using slave labor in a diversified system of farming, and the speculative element which plays so large a part in the culture of cotton, deterred the planters from making the desired changes in agriculture. The old planters continued to raise cotton on their best lands, and sent their sons with a part of the slaves to the more fertile lands of the West. The old lands which had been deserted by slave labor fell into the hands of the poor whites, who managed to secure a precarious living therefrom by means of small crops of corn, cotton and vegetables.

The extension of cotton culture next proceeded in the direction of the more northern states, North Carolina and Virginia, and considerable cotton was raised in these states during the early years of the present century. But the higher cost of raising cotton in the more northern latitudes, and the uncertainty of the plant reaching maturity before the arrival of the frosts, prevented the rapid growth of cotton culture in these states after 1830 which took place elsewhere, especially as the continual decline in the price of the staple only emphasized the disadvantages under which the planters of these states labored.

But on the pine lands of central and southwestern Georgia, in the river valleys of southern Tennessee, and in the fertile regions of central Alabama, both cotton and slavery spread with great rapidity. After his first experience on the uplands of South Carolina and Georgia, the cotton planter usually avoided the hill country and took his slaves to prairie soils and into the river valleys.

[1] See address of Whitemarsh B. Seabrook at the first anniversary meeting of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina, Dec. 6, 1827, *American Farmer*, X: 90-91.

The greater fertility and depth of soil of these lands rendered them more suitable for cotton growing,[1] and permitted a longer continuance of the "cropping," or "one-field" system of agriculture. The Piedmont region of north Georgia, the sand hill region of northern Alabama, and the oak lands in central Mississippi were left comparatively free from slavery, and but little cotton was grown there.

The effect which the acquisition of Louisiana would have upon the perpetuation and extension of slavery was not foreseen at the time of its purchase.[2] Although small crops of cotton had been grown in this territory previous to its acquisition by the United States, the advantages of the rich bottom lands along the Mississippi and Red rivers for cotton production were not appreciated until some years later. Cotton was supposed to have its home on the uplands. But about the beginning of the fourth decade of the present century the wonderful cotton growing qualities of the Mississippi country began to be understood, and an enormous migration to this region on the part of the slave holders and their property took place. Two hundred and fifty thousand slaves are said to have been brought into this region in the single year 1836,[3] and the *Virginia Times* (Wheeling) estimates that Virginia alone had sent one hundred and twenty thousand slaves to the South during the same year, forty thousand of whom were sold by their owners.[4] The alluvial lands along the Mississippi and Red rivers became the most fruitful cotton region of

[1] Cf. Milton Whitney, "Climatology and Soils," in "The Cotton Plant," 143.

[2] Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 185.

[3] Quoted from the *Natchez* (*Miss.*) *Courier*, in "Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade," 13.

[4] *Niles Register*, LI: 83.

the South, and slavery became more firmly imbedded there than anywhere else in the country.

The effect of the extension of cotton culture on the price of slaves, especially after the suppression of the slave trade, was, of course, to increase enormously the market value of this species of property. Data apparently do not exist for determining the comparative rate of increase of cotton production and the price of slaves. We have already had it stated that the best field hands at the end of the Revolution could be bought for two hundred dollars a head.[1] This sum Thomas Kettell estimates to have represented the average value of slaves in 1798, five years after the invention of the cotton gin; and by 1815 he considers the average price to have been about two hundred and fifty dollars.[2] In 1836, when the settlement of the Mississippi country was creating such a demand for slaves, the *Virginia Times* estimates the average value of the negroes exported from Virginia to have been six hundred dollars.[3] Considering the fact that the majority of these slaves sent to the South would be "prime field hands," the estimate is probably not too large; for only four years later, De Bow, the superintendent of the sixth census and the leading statistician of the South, thought five hundred dollars not too large a sum at which to estimate the average value of the slaves, young and old, who were dependent on cotton culture.[4] The annexation of Texas and the spread of cotton culture to its prairies of course resulted in an-

[1] Above, p. 42. Kapp's statement ("Geschichte der Sklaverei," 108), showing the average value of slaves in 1790 to be only $15, is certainly wrong.

[2] Kettell, "Southern Wealth and Northern Profits," 130. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 49.

[3] "Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade," 12.

[4] De Bow, "Industrial Resources of the South and West," I: 175.

other increase in the price of slaves. "They are now selling for five hundred, seven hundred and fifty, and one thousand dollars," wrote an English traveler in 1849.[1] And by 1860 Olmsted found in the Southwest that good field hands, suitable for cotton culture, possessed an average value of about fourteen hundred dollars, and sometimes sold as high as two thousand dollars.[2]

It was cotton and cotton alone which was responsible for this increase in the value of slave property. In spite of the use of slaves in the tobacco fields and on the rice and sugar plantations, the number of slaves employed in the cultivation of all other crops than cotton in 1850 was only slightly in excess of the number of slaves in the United States in 1790,[3] before the culture of the white staple had attained any importance. The natural increase among the blacks was almost entirely consumed by the cotton plantations, and even then the demand of the cotton planters was not satisfied. "The great limitation to production [of cotton]," said DeBow, "is labor."[4] For slave labor was considered at the South as the only kind which could be used in cultivating cotton. Everywhere in the slave region, in the border states as well as in the cotton belt, the value of the negro as a cotton cultivator, determined the price for which he would sell. "In estimating the market value of his labor, he was viewed for the time from the traders' point of view, or, as if the question were—What is he worth for cotton?"[5]

Slave dealers from the auction block called attention

[1] Sir Chas. Lyell, F.R.S., "A Second Visit to the United States of America," I: 207.

[2] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 151–2.

[3] Compendium of Seventh Census, 94.

[4] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 175.

[5] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," I: 1.

to the physical adaptability of the slave that they might be selling, for cotton picking or cultivating ;[1] and strong, active, adult, male negroes came to be known in the cotton belt as "cotton niggers," the same as the biggest and strongest mules are to-day known in Louisiana as "sugar mules."

After the legal prohibition of the slave trade, in spite of the fact that the smuggling of slaves into the country was always considerable, the demand for slaves by the planters of the cotton belt was met principally by the importation of negroes from the border states, as well as by the natural increase of those already there. Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, Delaware and the District of Columbia were all slave exporting states as early as 1840,[2] and later South Carolina was added to this number when her exhausted fields had made an extension of cotton culture at home unprofitable. Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and Kentucky were the chief sources of supply, and among these Virginia easily held first place. "We have made some efforts to obtain something like an accurate account of the number of negroes every year carried out of Virginia to the South and Southwest," writes Prof. Dew. "We have not been enabled to succeed completely; but from all the information we can obtain, we have no hesitation in saying that upwards of six thousand are yearly exported to other states. Virginia is, in fact, a negro raising state for other states. She produces enough for her own supply, and six thousand for sale."[3] This estimate, made early in the thirties, would

[1] Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 287.

[2] "Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade," 12. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 186.

[3] A review of the debate in the Virginia legislature, 1831–2, in "Pro-Slavery Argument" (1832), p. 399.

of course have been entirely too small for the later years of slavery when the settlement of the rich cotton lands in the Mississippi Valley and the annexation of Texas had created such a demand for negroes in those sections.[1]

Strange to say, this demand made on the border states for slaves for the cotton fields, instead of destroying slavery in those states, only seemed to perpetuate it. It is doubtful if slavery was a weaker institution in those states in 1860 than it was in 1790, although even at the South, among the friends of slavery, there was a difference of opinion in regard to this point. The rapid exhaustion of the tobacco lands should have caused slavery to die out in Virginia and Maryland. But just as it was on the point of doing so, the cotton business sprang up and created such a demand for the slaves that the border states found great profit in raising negroes to supply this market. Henceforth slaves were seldom kept in these states for the sake of raising crops, but crops were often cultivated for the sake of raising slaves. "It is believed that nowhere in the farming portion of the United States," said Henry Clay in 1829, "would slave labor be generally employed, if the proprietor were not tempted to raise slaves by the high price of the southern markets, which keeps it up in his own."[2] The negroes in Virginia, Maryland and Kentucky were often kept at some light employment, perhaps earning enough to pay for their subsistence, until they had reached maturity, when they were sold to traders who took them south.

[1] The Anti-Slavery Society estimated in 1840 the number of slaves annually sent south from the more northern states, at 80,000 per annum, but this estimate was based on the few preceding years when the Mississippi country was being settled, and is undoubtedly too large for a general average. About 1860, the movement is said to have been about 60,000 annually. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 282–3.

[2] "Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade," 17.

The horror which a slave had of being "sold south" arose from the fact that so much more labor was required of him in the cotton belt than in the border states, and was seldom due to a fear of more brutal treatment, for as a rule slaves were better treated in the cotton states than they were in the border states.[1]

It was the profitable slave trade carried on between the border states and the cotton states which led the residents of the former to lend such hearty support to the cotton growers' demand for more territory. "Texas comprehends a large extent of territory," wrote a correspondent of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1840. "It possesses in the judgment of practical men an unrivalled soil for the growth of the very finest kinds of cotton. . . . . By some [slave breeders] it has been estimated that the acquisition of Texas as a slave market would raise the price of their slaves fifty per cent. at least."[2]

It was the need of new lands for cotton growing which thus formed the basis of the demand for the widening of the national domain to the southwest, although this, the true cause, seldom appeared on the surface.[3]

To have urged in Congress or before the public that territorial expansion was necessary for increasing the cotton area would only have caused ridicule, for the number of acres devoted to cotton culture was always

[1] "Slavery showed at its worst where it was most seen by observers from the North—upon its edges." Wilson, "Division and Reunion," 125.

[2] "Slavery and the Internal Slave Trade," 248–50. Cf. Von Holst, *Op. Cit.*, II: 610–11.

[3] The demands of the cotton growers for territorial expansion did not cease with the annexation of Texas. Efforts were also made to secure Cuba and Nicaragua. See Rhodes, "History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850," II: 38 ff; 242 ff, 351–54. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 206–9.

insignificant as compared to the immense acreage on which the plant could be raised. As late as 1850 De Bow, the superintendent of the census, estimated that cotton was grown on only five million acres. But the exhaustive system of agriculture, which was inseparable from slave labor, made the cultivation of cotton on most of the lands unprofitable. When cotton had once left the uplands there was no thought of a return to them. After the early years of cotton culture, when the supply of this staple was not able to keep up with the demand, cotton prices, although subject to many fluctuations, tended to decline.[1] The cotton growers of the South therefore found themselves obliged to strive constantly to reduce the cost of production, while the chief item in this cost, labor, was steadily rising in value. Outside pressure was also being brought to bear upon them, for the efforts which the British manufacturers were making to relieve themselves from dependence upon one source of supply for their cotton[2] rendered the southern planters uneasy lest their most important market might be lost to them.[3] The necessity, therefore, of raising cotton by

[1] See Appendix I, chart.

[2] Cf. Book II, Chap. X.

[3] In spite of the bold assertions at the South that England was dependent on the slave labor of the southern states for the cotton for her mills, the efforts of the East India Co. to grow cotton in India were viewed with suspicion and disfavor in the United States. This company in 1840 sent Captain Bayles to the southern states to purchase cotton seed and ginning machinery, and to hire experienced planters from the states to go to India and to experiment there with cotton growing according to American ideas. When the object of this gentleman's visit became known at the South, "the violent opposition which he then had to encounter, compelled him to carry arms, and to labor under the constant fear of being forced to use them; and the virulent attacks of the press at Natchez, combined with a sense of the lawless state of the community, and the urgent representation of friends, compelled him to retreat the moment he had effected the object of his journey." Wheeler, "Cotton Cultivation, Madras vs. America," 27.

slave labor at a low cost of production, compelled them to seek out the fertile lands of the river valleys and the prairies. When these had been taken up, an extension of cotton cultivation could come only through the acquisition of new territory. To have recourse to less fertile soils would have necessitated the abandonment of slave labor, but to the planter slavery was a *sine qua non* of cotton cultivation.

There was another reason which powerfully influenced the cotton growers to seek the annexation of Texas. It was evident that the broad and fertile plains of this great country were destined to become the seat of an extensive cotton culture whether Texas became an integral part of the United States or not. But Texas as an independent state could import slaves from Africa or the West Indies at an expense much less than that which the planters of Louisiana or Mississippi must incur to secure them from Virginia or Maryland. The cotton planters of the southern states, therefore, saw a prospect of their industry being ruined by cheap labor in the cotton fields of Texas, and they labored earnestly to put this state where its inhabitants would be under the same restrictions as to the importation of slaves that they themselves were. The sugar planters of Louisiana were already suffering from such a competition in Cuba and were clamoring for a repeal of the prohibition on the importation of slaves. This prohibition, said they, "has no other effect than to cause the planter of Louisiana to pay to the Virginia slave-holder one thousand dollars for a negro which now in Cuba, and by and by in Texas, may be bought for half that money. . . . . The more we examine and reflect on the policy the Texans are likely to pursue in the matter, openly or covertly, the more we are convinced that Texas should be an-

nexed to the Union, or else Congress should repeal the law prohibiting the importation of slaves from Africa. Otherwise, the culture of sugar and cotton in Louisiana will suffer greatly by the cheaper labor which the planters of Cuba can and will employ." [1]

These economic motives for the extension of slave territory appealed more directly to the private interests of the southerners than did the political motive, the desire to preserve the equilibrium of power between the free and the slave states. And that the annexation of Texas would tend to preserve this equilibrium was by no means universally conceded at the South. Not only did hesitating politicians, like Clay, assert that the acquisition of Texas would not have any permanent influence on slavery,[2] but some of the most ardent pro-slavery men opposed annexation for the very reason that they saw in it a weakening of the political power of the slave states. The demand made in the border states for slaves by every extension of cotton culture was apparently straining to the utmost the slave producing powers of these states. Hence men like Waddy Thompson feared that the rise in the price of slaves which the annexation of Texas would bring, would completely withdraw from the border states their negroes, and give these states into the hands of the abolitionists.[3]

[1] *New Orleans Courier*, May 21, 1839; quoted in Jay, "Miscellaneous Writings," 298. Cf. Du Bois, "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America," 168 ff.

[2] *Niles Register*, LXVII: 439.

[3] "I am firmly persuaded that it is the certain and inevitable tendency of the annexation of Texas to promote the abolition of slavery. More so, indeed, than that of any other measure that has heretofore been proposed. . . . . Slave labor can be employed in Texas with at least twice the profit which it yields in the average of the slave states of the Union. Our slaves will then be carried to Texas by the force of a law as great and certain as that by which water finds

It is doubtful, indeed, if this would have been the result of slavery extension. The increased demand for slaves was met in the case of Texas not only by an advance in prices, but by the planters of the older cotton states, especially of the Carolinas, turning their attention from their former pursuits to slave breeding. There was also a positive increase in the number of slaves in Virginia and the border states between 1850 and 1860.[1]

When we come to consider the number of slaves employed in the cotton fields, and the geographical distribution of slavery and cotton growing, we are met by the most forcible illustration of the close connection between these two institutions. We do not, it is true, have any accurate statistics of the number of slaves employed in the cultivation of any of the southern crops, but De Bow has left us some careful estimates of the number of slaves dependent upon the culture of cotton in 1840 and 1850. In 1840 the slave population of the United States was 2,487,455. The slaves in the cotton states numbered 1,699,705. Of these, De Bow estimated that 1,200,000 were dependent on cotton culture. "And of these we estimate," says he, "eight hundred thousand as workers, which is probably not excessive when we consider that the Southwest, the great cotton region, is newly settled and the number of children out of all proportion less than in regions peopled by a natural growth of population."[2] The immense influence which cotton

its level. The slaves will very soon disappear from Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky, and in a period very short for such an operation, those states will become non-slave-holding states." W. Thompson in *The Democratic Review*, Sept., 1844, p. 239, quoted by Von Holst, *Op., Cit.*, II: 681, note.

[1] For tables showing the relative increase of the white and colored elements of the population in the cotton states and the border states, see Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 128–155, especially 138–9.

[2] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 175.

culture in this southwestern region exerted in drawing slaves thither between 1830 and 1840 has already been referred to. The increase of slaves during this decade in the new states and territories, (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee and Arkansas), was 86.30 per cent., while in the Atlantic coast states the increase in slave population was only 5.50 per cent. The increase in cotton production for the same period is estimated at 163 per cent. in the western, and 51 per cent. in the eastern states.[1]

In 1850 De Bow estimated that of the 3,204,313 slaves then in the United States, 2,500,000 were directly employed in agriculture, including persons of both sexes and all ages. The distribution of these to the various crops he makes as follows :[2]

Hemp	60,000,	or 2.5	per cent.
Rice	125,000,	" 5.0	"
Sugar	150,000,	" 6.0	"
Tobacco	350,000,	" 14 0	"
Cotton, etc	1,815,000,[3]	" 72.6	"

In 1860 the proportion of slaves in the ten cotton states was greater than in 1850, and although there was no estimate made by the Eighth Census of the number of slaves employed in the cultivation of the various crops, there is no reason for doubting that the proportion of slaves in the cotton states employed in the culture of

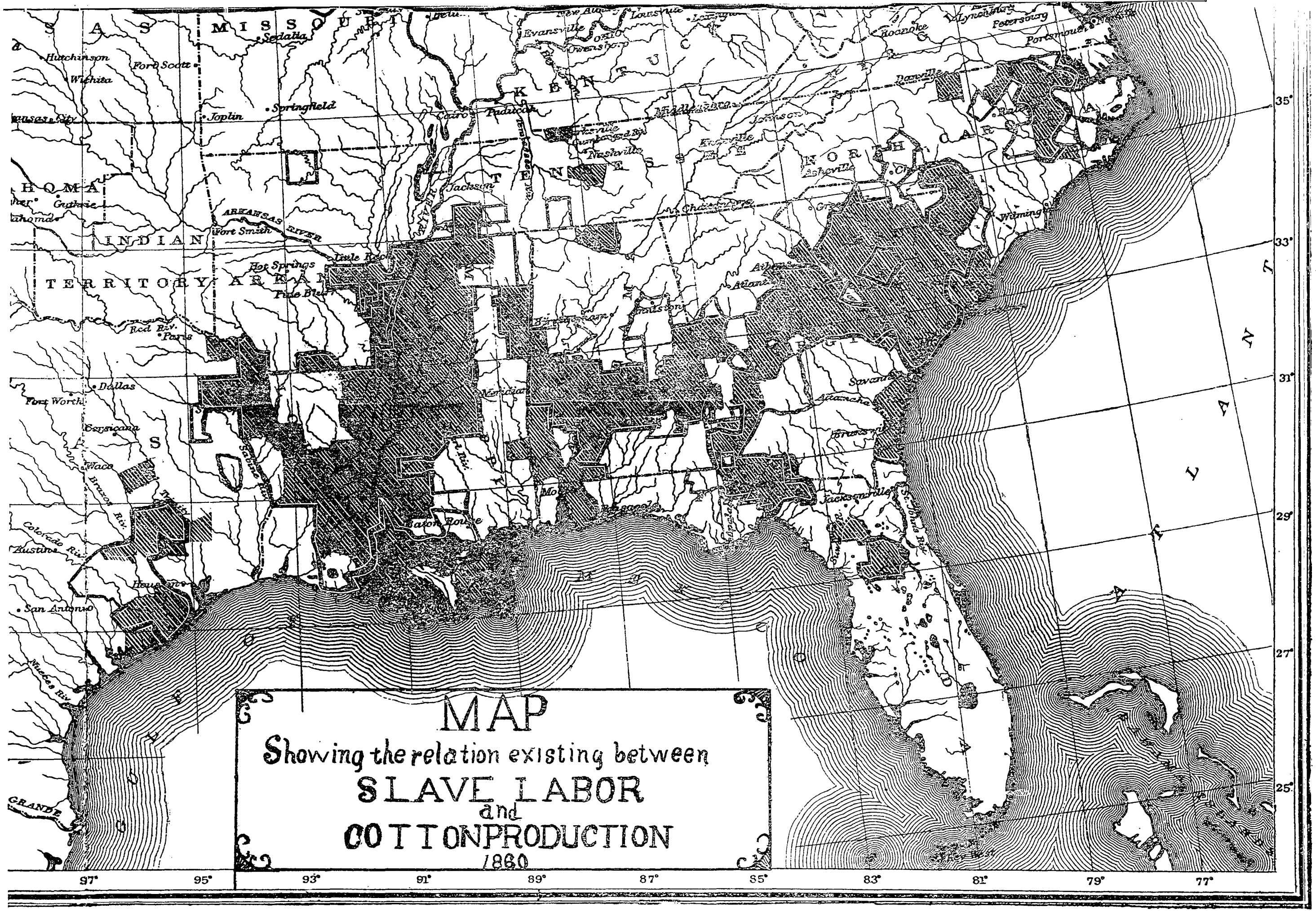
[1] " While the production in the Gulph States has doubled itself for the eighteen years, from 1824 to 1841 inclusive ; that of the Southern Atlantic States for the same period has remained nearly stationary. Actual average of the eighteen crops from 1824 to 1841 :

	1st 6 years.	2d 6 years.	3d 6 years.
Gulph States, - -	253,000 bales.	504,100 bales	1,030,000 bales.
Southern Atlantic States.	433,000 bales.	522,000 bales.	529,000 bales."

Seabrook, "Memoir on the Cotton Plant," 46.

[2] "Compendium of the Seventh Census, 94. Cf. Von Halle, 247–49.

[3] Equal to 78.3 per cent. of the 2,332,675 slaves in the ten cotton states.


MAP
Showing the relation existing between
SLAVE LABOR
and
COTTON PRODUCTION
1860
MISSOURI
KENTUCKY
TENNESSEE
NORTH CAROLINA
INDIAN TERRITORY
ARKANSAS
Hutchinson
Wichita
Fort Scott
Sedalia
Springfield
Joplin
Guthrie
Fort Smith
Arkansas River
Hot Springs
Little Rock
Pine Bluff
Red Riv.
Paris
Dallas
Fort Worth
Corsicana
Waco
Brazos Riv.
Trinity
Colorado Riv.
Austin
Houston
San Antonio
Nueces Riv.
Grande
Sabine Riv.
Baton Rouge
Meridian
Mobile
Birmingham
Atlanta
Savannah
Jacksonville
St. Johns Riv.
Evansville
Owensboro
Cairo
Paducah
Jackson
Nashville
Knoxville
Chattanooga
Asheville
Wilmington
Danville
Roanoke
Lynchburg
Petersburg
Portsmouth
Key West
97°
95°
93°
91°
89°
87°
85°
83°
81°
79°
77°
35°
33°
31°
29°
27°
25°

the fleecy staple was fully as large as in 1850. According to this reckoning we should have more than two and a quarter millions of slaves dependent principally on cotton culture for their enforced employment.

The geographical distribution of slaves and cotton culture shows even more strikingly than do the foregoing facts the connection which existed between these two institutions. In the accompanying map the diagonally lined surface represents those counties in the ten cotton states which had in 1860 a slave population as large or larger than the white population within the same area. The area included within the heavy black lines represents the same number of counties within each state as are included within the diagonally lined surface, these counties being the largest cotton producing counties in each state. The existence of large slave districts outside the cotton area is explained in the case of the Atlantic coast region by the rice culture, and in southern Louisiana by the cultivation of the sugar cane. In north-central Louisiana, where much cotton was raised, the slave population was slightly inferior in numbers to the whites, but from thirty-three to fifty per cent. of the population of each county in this section was slave. Elsewhere, it will be noticed, the two areas almost coincide.[1] Of the thirteen counties producing each over fifty thousand bales of cotton in 1859, there was only one which did not have from two to eight times as many slaves as it had white inhabitants.

[1] An interesting comparison can be made between this map and that on "Typical Soil Areas of the Cotton Belt," prepared by Major Harry Hammond, and published in "The Cotton Plant," 1896, p. 226. (The same map is in Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, frontispiece.) The comparison shows that slavery and cotton culture had their strongholds on the alluvial lands of the Carolinas, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas, and along the Mississippi and Red rivers; on the pine hills of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Texas; on the black prairies of Alabama and Mississippi, and on the valley lands of Tennessee and Alabama.

In the early days of cotton growing it had been supposed that the cultivation of this staple would be carried on principally by white labor.[1] And as late as 1808, Ramsay, the historian of South Carolina, wrote: "In estimating the value of cotton, its capacity to excite industry among the lower classes of the people and to fill the country with an independent, industrious yeomanry, is of high importance."[2] But the need of a new commodity, in whose production the slaves could be employed, and the advantages which cotton thus afforded, soon drew the large slave holders to the cultivation of this plant, and thus a barrier was erected to the extension of white labor in the South. The inevitable tendency of cotton culture under slavery to seek out the most fertile lands in the South, kept these lands out of the hands of the non-slave holders, and rendered competition in cotton growing by white labor on the small farms almost impossible. In the Southwest, the great cotton producing country, De Bow says: "The non-slave holders possess generally but very small means, and the land which they possess is almost universally poor and so sterile that a scanty subsistence is all that can be derived from its cultivation, and the more fertile soil being in the hands of the slave holders, must ever remain out of the power of those who have none."[3] To have worked as a hired laborer on the large plantation, cultivating cotton alongside of the negro slave, was too much of a social disgrace for the self-respecting white man in the South to undergo. To "work like a nigger," the southern way of expressing contempt for the

[1] See Richard Leake's letter to Tench Coxe, in Dana's "Cotton from Seed to Loom," 23.

[2] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," I: 449.

[3] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," II: 106.

white man who was obliged to earn his living in this way, proved a hindrance which not only prevented the "poor whites" in the South from rising in the scale of life, but repelled European emigrants from the southern shores. Of the foreign-born in the United States in 1850, 1,866,397 were in the non-slave holding states, and 378,205 were in the slave holding states. These constituted 13.89 per cent. and 3.91 per cent. of the aggregate population of their respective sections. Few of these aliens engaged in the culture of cotton, although where they did so, as in the case of the German settlers around New Braunfels, Texas, the result of the experiment showed that the success of cotton growing was in no way dependent upon the use of slave labor.

This belief in the necessity of slave labor for cotton growing had unfortunately taken deep hold upon the people of the South.[1] "It is impossible to destroy the one without destroying the other. The alliance between cotton and negroes, we will venture to say, is now the strongest power in the world," declared a writer in *De Bow's Review*.[2] The small number of whites engaged in the culture of cotton (the number is usually estimated at from one-tenth to one-sixth the number of slaves so employed) and the readily accepted theory that the climate of the cotton belt was unpropitious to white labor,[3] lent color to this belief in the dependence of cotton upon slavery, and strengthened the southern mind in the belief in the justice of their cause and its final triumph in

[1] "The slave holders of the South, in their argument in favor of slavery, derived from cotton as a power in the world, assume that slavery is indispensable to cotton culture." Stirling, "Letters from the Slave States," 175. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 201, 326-331.

[2] W. W. Wright, "Cotton and Negroes," *De Bow's Review*, N. S., IV: 139.

[3] J. H. Van Evrie, M.D., "Negroes and Negro Slavery," 171.

the impending struggle. "You dare not make war upon cotton. No power on earth dare make war upon it. Cotton is king," declared ex-Governor Hammond of South Carolina in the United States Senate March 4, 1858.[1] And De Bow enjoined his people that: "To the slave holding states, it [cotton] is the great source of their power and their wealth, and the main security for their peculiar institutions. . . . . Let us teach our children to hold the cotton plant in one hand and a sword in the other, ever ready to defend it as the source of commercial power abroad, and through that, of independence at home."[2]

The exaggerated importance which southerners attached to their great staple in the commerce and manufacture of the world, coupled with this belief that cotton could be successfully cultivated only by slave labor, led them to trust in the opposition of the New England cotton manufacturing districts to an attack on the slave states, and to expect armed interference on the part of Great Britain should war become inevitable.[3] McHenry's work on "The Cotton Trade," published during the war and addressed to the English people, was written for the purpose of demonstrating this dependence of the English cotton industry on the slave power of the southern states. But neither in New England[4] nor in Lancashire was this theory of the necessity of slavery accepted. The great Manchester statesmen, Richard Cobden and John Bright, who by securing the

[1] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," I: 7. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 217, note 3.

[2] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 178. Cf. *De Bow's Review*, XV: 9; XX: 489.

[3] Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 331.

[4] Cf. Edward Atkinson's Report in Boston Board of Trade Report for 1863.

repeal of the corn laws, had won the lasting friendship of the workingmen, were foremost in asserting that the forced dependence of Lancashire on slave labor was the most serious obstacle to the expansion of the cotton industry. "I maintain," said Mr. Bright in a speech at the London Tavern, June 16, 1863, "that with a supply of cotton mainly derived from the southern states, and raised by slave labor, two things are indisputable: First, that the supply must always be insufficient, and, second, that it must always be insecure. . . . . I maintain—and I believe my opinion will be supported by all those men who are most conversant with American affairs—that with slavery abolished, with freedom firmly established in the South, you would find in ten years to come a rapid increase in the growth of cotton, and not only would its growth be rapid, but its permanent increase would be secured. . . . . There is no greater enemy to Lancashire, to its capital and to its labor, than the man who wishes the cotton agriculture of the southern states to be continued under the condition of slave labour." [1]

Political motives led many parliamentary leaders to look with no disfavor upon the prospect of a breaking up of the American union, but economic as well as philanthropic motives caused the British workingmen to lend their sympathy to the cause of human freedom. From no other quarter came a more earnest protest against measures intended to aid the slave power than from Lancashire, where two hundred thousand idle workingmen were forced to eat the bread of charity because Yankee gunboats had cut off from their mills the

[1] "Speeches of John Bright," edited by Thorold Rogers, 130–33. See also Cobden's letters in the *American Historical Review*, January, 1897.

slave-grown cotton of the southern states. Neither the operatives nor the mill owners were to be deluded by the sophistry of the slave holders.[1] When this had become apparent, and it had become evident that Great Britain would not interfere in the struggle in America, the cause of the South had become hopeless. "King Cotton" had failed in his last effort to bolster up the power of an institution which had long survived its period of usefulness.

[1] "Cotton is great, but conscience is greater, and in any question where these two powers may come in conflict the issue for the English mind will be nowise doubtful." Stirling, "Letters from the Slave States," 176.

CHAPTER III.

SOUTHERN AGRICULTURE, 1790–1860.

Important as were the changes in spinning and weaving cotton, brought about by the introduction of machinery and the establishment of the factory system, and great as was the influence of the saw-gin on the development of the cotton industry, these discoveries and appliances in the mechanical arts do not suffice in themselves to explain the remarkable expansion of this industry during the succeeding years. Back of the machine production, although greatly stimulated thereby, lay the demand for cotton goods originating in the fashionable tastes of the higher classes, but continuing in popularity when increased supplies of raw material and cheaper modes of production had brought these fashionable fabrics within the reach of the humbler members of society.[1] So, behind the invention of the saw-gin lay the forces which really determined the supply side of the question. These forces were the energy of the southern people, the suitability of their climate for cotton production, and most important of all, the wide area within the southern states on which cotton could be successfully grown. The failure of the saw-gin to come into general or even extensive use in India and the other cotton producing countries, shows that something more than its invention is necessary to explain the wonderful development of the American cotton culture and trade during the succeeding century. The invention of the saw-gin was only the unlocking of

[1] Cf. Book II, Chap. VIII.

the door of a great storehouse of cotton, so that all the world might draw from its seemingly unlimited stock the material for its clothing.

In 1793, when the invention of the saw-gin had removed the last obstacle to the spread of cotton culture throughout the South, the cultivation of this plant was still confined almost entirely to the tide-water region of the states of Virginia, Maryland, Georgia and the Carolinas. Even within this region its culture was by no means general. The greatest production came from the southern portion, especially from Georgia, where the sea-island or long staple variety had been introduced seven years before. But, although it excelled all other varieties as a marketable commodity, the sea-island cotton was subject to narrow geographical limitations, and all efforts to produce it at a distance from the sea coast proved futile. The upland planters, therefore, found themselves restricted to the cultivation of the green seed cotton, a short staple variety, but little known to southern planters previous to the Revolution. This variety of cotton seems to be the result of a crossing of the *Herbaceum* of eastern origin with the *Hirsutum*, probably of western origin. Experiments made with its cultivation had already shown it to have advantages over the black seed varieties as respects yield and method of cultivation, and Whitney's invention had at last removed the only hindrance which, since the Revolution, had prevented the planters from producing it as a marketable commodity. From Augusta as a center and chief market, the culture of the short staple cotton spread throughout the upland districts of Georgia and South Carolina. For more than a quarter of a century this continued to be the principal cotton producing region

of the country; as late as 1820 over one-half of the entire crop grown was raised in these two states alone.[1]

The success of the cotton growers of Georgia and South Carolina now led the states to the north of them, Virginia and North Carolina, to attempt the production of this staple. Miller & Whitney sold their patent right to the saw-gin within the state of North Carolina to that state in December, 1802. At this time the culture of cotton had made but little progress within this state.[2] But although the production of the staple continued to increase in both North Carolina and Virginia, its culture made no such rapid progress as in the states to the south and west of them. There was comparatively little land suited to the production of cotton, and the climate was less propitious than it was farther south. The danger that the frosts would come before the plant reached maturity made cotton growing a hazardous undertaking, and when the price sank below ten or twelve cents a pound, the cotton crops of both these states showed an immediate falling off. By 1860 the cotton area of Virginia was confined to eight or ten counties lying in the south-eastern corner of the state. In North Carolina the principal seat of cotton growing was on the long leaf pine lands extending through the middle of the state from north to south.

Cotton culture seems to have begun in Tennessee almost coincident with the admission of that state into the Union. As early as July, 1797, Mr. Miller, of the firm of Miller & Whitney, proposed to his partner that they send an agent to Knoxville, "where we were informed that cotton was valuable," and to Nashville and the Cumberland settlements, to gather information concern-

[1] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," III: 25.

[2] Olmsted, "Memoir of Eli Whitney, Esq.," 31.

ing the culture of cotton in these parts and the mode of cleaning it.[1] On the return of the agent through the "back parts of Virginia," he was to look for an inland market for the consumption of cotton cleaned by the saw-gin.[2] By the beginning of the century the culture of cotton in Tennessee had attained such importance that public meetings of the citizens were called at various places to petition the Legislature to purchase of Miller & Whitney their patent right to the saw-gin within the limits of Tennessee. At one of these meetings held in Nashville, July 21, 1802, Gen. Andrew Jackson presided.[3] In accordance with the desire of the petitioners, the legislature of Tennessee in 1803 purchased of Miller & Whitney the right to use the saw-gin within the state limits. Cotton production in this state, with the exception of a few years in the '40's, continued to increase at a uniform rate until the outbreak of the Civil War.

Although cotton had been cultivated in the great territory of Louisiana even before its purchase by the United States, little attention had been given to the western lands until after 1820. Cotton was still supposed to be the staple of the uplands. But in the decade ending with 1830, the superiority of the prairie lands and river bottoms for cotton growing began to be appreciated, and by 1830 the western country had outstripped the eastern states in cotton production. It was in the following decade, however, that cotton cultivation in the United States received its most rapid extension from the settlement of the western lands. The movement of slave holders and their property to central Alabama and to

[1] Letter of Phineas Miller to Eli Whitney, July 21, 1797. *American Historical Review*, October, 1897.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Aurora and General Advertiser* (Frankford, Penna.), Sept. 3, 1802, communication from Nashville, dated July 21.

the Mississippi river bottoms we have already mentioned. A perfect mania for cotton raising and for speculation in western lands had seized hold of the people during these years.

This speculative tendency was greatly fostered by the operations of the state banks, which were established in this region after the downfall of the United States Bank. The facility with which these banks granted loans gave an unnatural stimulus to the purchase of farming lands and to the extension of cotton growing. The new settlers in the western country took up large tracts of land, which, together with their negroes, they mortgaged to the new banks for loans with which to carry on their planting industry, and then turned over to the banks the cotton which they harvested.[1] Trusting in the high prices of cotton, the banks advanced funds far beyond what wisdom dictated, sometimes advancing as much as fifteen cents per pound.[2] In 1836–7 came a great collapse in prices, followed by a period of bank failures and of distress for the new planters who were unable to obtain further advances for continuing their agricultural operations.[3] Within a period of three years fifty-five million dollars had been applied to the cultivation of lands in the new cotton states, and the production of cotton in these states had nearly doubled.[4]

The following tables[5] show the progress of land sales and cotton culture in the Southwest, together with the capital applied to banking in the new states during the speculative period:[6]

[1] *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIII: 470–72.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 160.
[4] *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine*, XIII: 470–72.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.* I have given the figures as published, although there is a slight discrepancy in the totals by years. Cf. the tables in Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 203–205.

Year.	Acres of U. S. Lands Sold in the New States.						Annual Cotton Crop—Bales.	
	Alabama.	Mississippi.	Louisiana.	Arkansas.	Florida	Total.	New States.	Total U. S.
1833	451,319	1,221,494	89,441	41,859	11,970	1,816,083	559,219	1,070,428
1834	1,072,457	1,064,454	82,570	149,756	16,309	2,388,146	641,435	1,205,394
1835	1,587,002	2,931,181	325,955	630,027	48,304	5,522,474	760,923	1,254,328
1836	1,901,409	2,023,709	829,456	963,535	87,071	5,805,180	788,013	1,360,725
1837	381,773	256,354	230,932	281,916	108,839	1,259,814	916,960	1,422,930
1838	159,969	271,074	164,178	156,971	68,814	821,600	747,227	1,801,497
1839	121,935	17,787	500,307	154,858	56,499	851,586	911,913	1,366,932
1840	56,784	19,174	189,228	110,610	25,602	401,394	1,538,904	2,177,840
1841	50,705	21,635	95,111	54,860	6,388	228,699	1,231,334	1,634,945
1842	118,827	43,966	45,360	24,391	5,333	238,079	1,160,389	1,683,960
Total	5,902,180	7,880,828	2,554,138	2,568,783	435,129	19,333,055	9,256,308	14,978,979

CAPITAL APPLIED TO BANKING IN THE NEW STATES.

States.	State Loans.	Private Capital	Total.
Alabama, 1835-7	$ 8,100,000	$ 1,000,000	$ 9,100,000
Mississippi, 1838	7,500,000	25,000,000	32,500,000
Louisiana, 1835-6	9,321,000	22,000,000	31,321,000
Arkansas, 1840	3,500,000		3,500,000
Florida, 1833-9	3,900,000		3,900,000
Total	$32,321,000	$48,000,000	$80,321,000

It will be seen that from 1833 to 1840 nearly the entire increase in the cotton production of the United States came from the new states. After 1840 there was a falling off for some years, owing to the depression in the price of the staple, caused by over-production and the collapse of speculation. Cotton growing in the Mississippi Valley received a new impetus, however, after 1850, and by the outbreak of the Civil War over one-half the cotton grown in the United States was produced in the three states, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.[1]

The possibilities of Texas as a cotton growing region were fully appreciated even before that vast territory had become a part of the Union. The most notable in-

[1] Ellison, "A Centennial Sketch of the Cotton Trade of the United States," 19. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 169, 204-5.

crease in cotton production between 1850 and 1860 came from this state, but the sparse population prevented it from surpassing the Mississippi country as a cotton producing region previous to the Civil War.

By 1850 all the territory through which the cotton belt now passes had been acquired by the United States, and the outline of the cotton belt, almost as it has since remained, was already to be traced. Some counties, especially in Texas and Arkansas which did not then produce cotton now do so, and in all of the states the acreage and production of many counties have greatly increased, and yet the boundaries of the cotton belt have been pushed comparatively little beyond what they were in 1850.[1] In the new states west of the Mississippi the cotton region lay entirely to the south of the isothermal line for mean summer temperature. East of the river it extended north of this line which passed through northern Alabama and Georgia and middle South Carolina. The area of chief production began in southeastern Virginia, and, usually avoiding the coast, passed through the central portions of the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi; then widened to the northward and embraced northern Louisiana and southern Arkansas, and ended in the central portion of the great state of Texas.[2]

It will doubtless surprise many readers to learn that notwithstanding this vast area within which cotton was the leading staple cultivated, the actual acreage devoted to this crop at any time previous to the Civil War was very small. The crop of 1859–60, which was by far the

[1] Compare maps prepared by Edward Atkinson in Boston Board of Trade Report for 1863, and by Olmsted in "The Cotton Kingdom," with those in the volume on Agriculture, Eleventh Census of the U. S. See also Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 168.

[2] Boston Board of Trade Report for 1863, map.

largest that had ever been produced, being in excess of two billion pounds, was raised on an acreage less than that included within the boundaries of South Carolina, even when the most liberal estimate of the cotton acreage is accepted.[1]

In 1836, when cotton cultivation had begun to extend beyond the Mississippi, Woodbury's Report, estimating the production per acre at a little less than two hundred and fifty pounds, considered the whole amount of land then devoted to cotton raising to be not far from two million acres.[2] From calculations made on the basis of the census of 1840, De Bow estimated the number of acres devoted to the cultivation of cotton at 4,500,000,[3] and in 1850, as superintendent of the Seventh Census, he estimated the cotton area at five million acres.[4] The census of 1860 estimated the large crop of cotton grown that year to be the product of 6,968,498 acres, but as already mentioned, later and more careful estimates nearly double the acreage. It is quite probable that the estimates of early years were also too conservative, and that the entire acreage was larger than it was then supposed to be. But even if the later estimate of 13,000,000 acres for 1860 be allowed, we still find the total acreage to have been less than four per cent. of the landed area of the ten great cotton states. Nearly all the tillable land in these states was capable of cotton production, and yet the demand for more land for the cultivation of

[1] "The entire area in cotton in 1860 was certainly not less than 13,000,000 acres." Report of United States Commissioner of Agriculture, 1876, p. 120.

[2] Woodbury's Report, 19. De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 175, considers this estimate too low.

[3] "Industrial Resources," I: 175.

[4] Compendium of Seventh Census, 176. Estimated acreage of other crops: Indian corn, 31,000,000 acres; hay, 13,000,000 acres; wheat, 11,000,000 acres; oats, 7,500,000 acres.

this staple constituted the basis of the southern clamor for an extension of the federal domain.

The preceding pages have made us familiar with the so-called "colonial system of agriculture," as applied to the cultivation of tobacco, rice and indigo, and we have learned the results of this reckless method of cultivation on the fertility of the soil.[1] The colonial system was the only system in vogue when the era of cotton culture began, and the cultivation of this plant, therefore, came under the same unfortunate methods of farming as were pursued in the culture of the other southern staples. Only in the sea island cotton producing districts was there any notable improvement in agricultural methods due to the introduction and extension of cotton culture. Early experiments in the culture of this variety of cotton showed that its price was greatly heightened by improvements in its quality, and this fact led the planters of the long staple cotton to use great care in the selection of the seed and in the subsequent cultivation of the plant.[2] Throughout the great cotton belt, however, where either the upland or New Orleans cotton[3] was cultivated, but little attention was given to methods of agriculture, that method being considered the most profitable which raised the largest crop with the least trouble to the planter.

The method of clearing cotton lands, while not char-

[1] Above, pp. 38–42.

[2] H. Hammond, "Cotton Production in South Carolina," Tenth Census, vol. VI, 476-7. "The Culture of Cotton," in "The Cotton Plant," 231.

[3] The New Orleans or Gulf cotton, superior to the upland varieties, although of the green seed species, is supposed to be the result of a crossing of the upland with the sea island cotton, as large quantities of cotton seed of the latter variety were shipped to Louisiana shortly after its purchase by the United States. De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 120. Seabrook, *Op. Cit.*, 15–16.

acteristic of the southern states alone, and considering the abundance of timber and the scarcity of labor in the early years, often justifiable, seems to the scientific agriculturist a very wasteful one. Weak handed planters in selecting a site for a plantation in a timbered region, first cut through the bark a ring around the larger trees. This caused the trees to die. The smaller trees were at once cut down and burned, and the ground broken up and planted. In a few seasons the wind would blow down the deadened trees, which would then be rolled together in log heaps and also burned. Usually a few crops of Indian corn or wheat would be taken off the land before the fields were ready for cotton.[1]

The methods of planting and cultivating cotton while slavery continued were very simple, and with few variations were the same throughout the South. After preparing the land for cultivation by breaking down the cotton or corn stalks of the previous year, the field was laid off in beds by plowing a furrow between the old rows and lapping on this from four to six other furrows, according to the size of the plow and the desired distance between the rows. The field was thus left in ridges about four feet apart. After the ground had been pulverized by a small harrow, the ridges were split open with a small plow, and the seed was sown into this furrow at the rate of two or more bushels per acre. This was usually done by a negro woman, who carried the seed in her apron and strewed the seed several feet along the furrow at each cast of the hand. The furrow was closed by means of the harrow or a board which had a concave under surface to fit the crest of the ridge, and was screwed to a small shovel or "scooter" plow. When the cotton had attained a height of several inches,

[1] Mills, "Statistics of South Carolina," 661.

the laborious process of thinning began. This was done by means of a hoe, followed (sometimes preceded) by a plow to again round up the ridge, and to keep the space between the rows free from weeds. With the hoe the grass on the sides of the ridge was cleaned away, and the cotton blocked out in the rows, leaving two plants (eventually only one) in hills twelve or fourteen inches apart. The cotton continued to be cultivated in this way with the hoe and plow or with an implement called a "sweep," at intervals of about twenty days, until nearly picking time, the ground being thus gone over from three to five times.[1] Planting began as early as the end of February in some of the eastern states, and was often not ended until the middle of May in the Southwest. The first blooms usually appeared in May and June, and picking began about the first of August in the east and continued until the middle of December in the west.[2] This was a tedious but not laborious task, and in its accomplishment women and children as well as men were employed. In the early part of the century, fifty pounds a day were accounted the average per hand, but by 1854 Wailes states that "the children double this; and two hundred pounds is not unfrequently the average of the whole gang of hands, to say nothing of those who pick their four or five hundred pounds of cotton."[3]

There were few agricultural implements employed in the cultivation of cotton previous to the war, and such as were in use were of a very simple order. Machinery

[1] Patent Office Report (Agriculture) 1849-50, 313-316. Wailes, Report on Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi, 1854, 150-155. Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 414.

[2] Levasseur, "Agriculture aux Etats-Unis," 121. Cf. H. Hammond, "The Culture of Cotton," in "The Cotton Plant," 262.

[3] Wailes, "Report on Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi," 1854, 154. Cf. H. Hammond, "The Culture of Cotton," *Loc. Cit.*, 264-5.

was not used at all in the cultivation of southern crops. The tools employed were usually the work of the neighborhood blacksmith, or were made on the plantation, "in a style which was the excess of bungling."[1] Such were the "scooter" or "bull tongue," a strip of four inch bar iron, pointed and bent, used for opening the furrow in which the seed was sown;[2] the "sweep," an implement having two wide-cutting blades forming two sides of a triangle, and used for cleaning the grass or weeds from the rows;[3] and the "scraper" already described, used for covering the furrow in which the seed had been sown. These tools, together with the clumsy all-iron breaking plows and turning plows, and the hoe, "the rudest, the least effective and the most exhaustive to strength and patience of any tool largely used,"[4] were about the only implements that were in use on the southern plantations before the war. Even "cotton planters" were not widely used. Seabrook reports that as late as 1844 the plow was unknown to the growers of the long staple cotton, except "in the breaking up of the soil, and, as an assistant, in forming the ridge."[5] The slight expenditure for agricultural implements is illustrated by the statement of DeBow that on a South Carolina plantation of 4200 acres, 2700 of which were under cultivation, and where two hundred and fifty-four slaves were employed, the capital invested in all plantation tools and implements, including wagons, was only equal to $1,262, and on an Alabama plantation of 1100 acres, with 120 slaves, the implements were valued at $500.[6]

[1] Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 424.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Wailes, *Op. Cit.*, 152.
[4] Report of Commissioner of Agriculture, 1866, 208.
[5] "Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton," 23.
[6] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 162–3.

Much was written by southern agriculturists and editors previous to 1860 on the subject of fertilizers for cotton. Nevertheless, the use of this artificial means for restoring fertility to the soil was a very limited one. In 1808, Ramsay wrote of the South Carolina planters as follows: "The art of manuring land is little understood and less practiced. The bulk of the planters, relying on the fertility of the soil, seldom planting any but what is good, and changing land when it begins to fail for that which is fresh, seldom give themselves the trouble to keep their fields in heart."[1] Although there were thousands of acres of pasture lands which could have been utilized for raising stock or for raising hay to feed the cattle in winter, although there were numerous beds of compost and marl scattered throughout the southern states, "ample for a perpetual supply of all possible drain upon the resources of the soil,"[2] and although the long coast line was able to furnish "abundant stores of fish and seaweed for manuring adjacent fields,"[3] very few of the planters knew of the value and use of these fertilizers, and of those who did know, but few applied them.[4]

Cotton is said to be the least exhaustive to the soil of any of the great staple crops of America,[5] and if the seed is returned to the soil there is comparatively little of the vitality of the land withdrawn by cultivation, but even this slight effort at fertilization was not resorted to by the majority of the cultivators. There were always, of course, a few planters who gave their attention to improved methods of cultivation and made a profitable use

[1] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II: 225.
[2] Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 427.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Patent Office Report (Agriculture), 1852–3, 387–8.
[5] Hilgard, Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi, 242.

of fertilizers, and there were many more who scattered on their lands the cotton seed or the small supplies of stable manure which had collected over winter. So little attention was given to stock raising,[1] however, and to the preservation of the stable manures, that these feeble efforts to delay exhaustion were of little avail. The planters in the rich bottom lands along the Mississippi, hauled the cotton seed into the bayous to be eaten by the hogs or to be carried into the Gulf by the "Father of Waters."[2]

During the later years of the slave régime cotton seed became a valuable article for the market and the planters began hauling it to the cotton seed mills. Had they stipulated for a return of the hulls after the oil had been extracted, and returned these to the soil, there would still have been but little loss to the soil and perhaps a gain,[3] but few of them did this. Land was so little valued that the owners did not consider it profitable to attempt to maintain the fertility of old lands when new ones of greater fertility were to be had almost for the asking. It was considered more profitable to withdraw the entire wealth from the soil than to replace it, more profitable to "kill land" than to cultivate it.[4]

As was naturally to be supposed, the first signs of exhaustion came from the Atlantic coast states, and some attention had been given in the Carolinas and Georgia during the '50's to restoring the fertility of the soil by means of manuring and crop rotation.[5] In the South-

[1] Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 425.

[2] Hilgard, *Op. Cit.*, 245. Von Halle, 290.

[3] Hilgard, *Op. Cit.*, 244–5.

[4] White, "The Manuring of Cotton," in "The Cotton Plant," Bulletin No. 33, Office of Experiment Stations, Dept. of Agriculture, pp. 170–171.

[5] H. Hammond, "Cotton Cultivation in South Carolina," 13. Tenth Census of the U. S., VI.

west, however, no attention was given to this subject until some years after the war, and even in the eastern states the proportion of fertilized land was insignificant.

The failure of the cotton planter to use fertilizers he did not atone for by adopting any other measures for the prevention of soil exhaustion. Rotation of crops was almost unknown at the South where the one-field system of cultivation had come down from colonial days. The one great object was to raise cotton[1] and the land was planted in this crop for a succession of years, until it refused longer to bring forth a remunerative yield and was then "turned out" to grow up in briars, sassafras, and scrub pines.[2] "A purchaser looking for land, if he found a field without a stump, considered that fact *prima facie* evidence that it was worn out."[3]

The suitableness of cotton for slave labor and the high prices which this staple often brought on the market stimulated the planters to raise cotton almost exclusively, and to raise it on lands which were better suited to other crops.[4] The high prices of provisions compelled many of the planters, especially in the eastern states, to alternate corn with cotton, thus making a two-field system of cultivation. But such a change was of little value in preventing the wearing out of the lands for it violated the first principles of rotation introduced into agricultural science by the old three-field system of cultivation, which prescribed that crops of the same nature should not be planted in succession, but that a winter crop should succeed a summer crop with the land lying fallow the third year.[5] Both Indian corn and cot-

[1] Hilgard, Agriculture and Geology of Mississippi, 241.
[2] Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1876, 216.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Lieber, Report on the Survey of South Carolina, 111.
[5] Buchenberger, "Agrarwesen und Agrarpolitik, I: 32.

ton were summer crops, were cultivated in the same manner, and although their chemical analysis was imperfect, seemed to draw the same ingredients from the soil. Yet as late as 1860 this was the only regular rotation pursued on any large scale in the cotton belt.[1]

Drainage and various systems of sub-soiling were measures often recommended for deferring, if not preventing, the exhaustion of the soil. The Tullian or Lois Weeden system, which combined fallowing with sub-soiling, was for some time a theme much discussed by "theoretical" agriculturists, but not many "practical" farmers had heard of it, much less made use of it. Deep plowing was little followed. The ground was usually scratched to the depth of about two and a half inches by the old iron breaking plows universally in use on the plantations, and when this shallow cultivation had ceased to be profitable, the planter removed to new lands.

This system of agriculture which was so rapidly depleting the cotton lands of their fertility, was not characteristic of the South alone. It had been the method universally practiced in all the North American colonies, and it is still the only system known on the wheat lands of the Northwest. Intensive culture has never been resorted to by any people or in any region as long as the extensive system has proven the more profitable. Labor and capital are too scarce in a new country to admit of any other than an extensive system being pur-

[1] Hilgard, *Op. Cit.*, 241. By an investigation made by the Bureau of Agriculture in 1867, as to the amount of land cultivated in various crops previous to the war, it appears that in the ten cotton states cotton occupied on an average 44 per cent. of the tillable area, and corn 38 per cent. Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 414. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 289-90.

sued. "New settlers are not censurable for beginning this exhaustive culture."[1]

But what was notable about southern agriculture was that even the apparent injury done to the land by the "one crop" system had little or no effect in bringing about a change in the methods of cultivation. "The system is such," wrote an editor of a southern agricultural paper in 1860, "that the planter scarcely considers his land as a part of his permanent investment." It is rather a part of his current expenses. He buys a wagon and uses it until it is worn out, and then throws it away. He buys a plow, or hoe, and treats both in the same way. He buys land, uses it until it is exhausted and then sells it, as he sells scrap iron, for whatever it will bring. It is with him a perishable or movable property. It is something to be worn out, not improved. The period of its endurance is, therefore, estimated in its original purchase, and the price is regulated accordingly. If it be very rich, level land that will last a number of years, the purchaser will pay a fair price for it. But if it be rolling land, as is the greater bulk of the interior of the southern states, he considers how much of the tract is washed or worn out, how long the fresh land will last, how much is too broken for cultivation, and in view of these points determines the value of the property."[2]

As the land became exhausted in the old cotton states, such as South Carolina and Georgia, the planters abandoned their estates and moved farther west to Alabama or Tennessee, there to begin over again the process of "land killing" and then, perhaps, once more desert

[1] Patent Office Report (Agriculture), 1852–53, 374.

[2] C. W. Howard of Georgia, Patent Office Report (Agriculture), 1860, 226.

their fields and settle on the virgin soils of Arkansas or Texas. Of those who did not leave the older states, many abandoned cotton culture. The cotton crop of 1860 showed an increase of more than 100 per cent. over that of 1850. But the increase in the Atlantic coast states was only 44 per cent., while in the western states, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas, the increase was over 153 per cent.[1] The crop of 1850 was about an average one for the decade 1851–60. If we could compare by states the average crops for the two decades, it is doubtful whether we would find much, if any, increase in the production of the Atlantic states.

While the value per acre of the occupied land in the older states of the North was several times greater than in the new states to the west of them, in the South directly the opposite of this was true. In 1850 the occupied land in the Atlantic coast states was valued at only $5.34 per acre, while that of the southwestern states was worth $6.26 per acre.[2] "What are we to do in South Carolina?" wrote ex-Governor Hammond of that state in 1858. "But a small proportion of the land we now cultivate will produce two thousand pounds of ginned cotton to the hand. It is thought that our average production can not exceed twelve hundred pounds, and that a great many planters do not grow over one thousand pounds to the hand. . . . . A great deal has been said upon [the improvement of our agricultural system].[3] Neither our agricultural societies nor our agricultural essays have affected anything worth speaking of. And

[1] Percentages deduced from census returns of 1860. See Preliminary Report of the Eighth Census, 201.

[2] Compendium of Seventh Census, 175.

[3] Words in brackets an abridgement of the thought expressed.

it does seem that, while the fertile regions of the Southwest are open to the cotton planters, it is vain to expect them to embark, to any extent, in improvements which are expensive, difficult or hazardous. . . . . Our cotton region is too broad and our southern people too homogeneous for metes and bounds to enforce the necessity of improving any particular locality."[1]

But the low prices and greater fertility of the western lands were not the only reasons why the exhaustive system of land cultivation continued at the South. The same opportunities for western expansion existed at the North, and while the methods of cultivation there were far from perfect, it had been found more profitable in New England and the Middle states to manure the ground and to rotate the crops when the fields showed signs of exhaustion than to abandon them for western lands. Only the surplus population was sent to the new states.

The diversity of crops grown was much greater in the North than in the South, and this permitted the adoption of a more complex and beneficial system of tillage than the one or two field systems. In the South the greater crops of all the slave holding states were hoed crops, cotton, corn, tobacco, and sugar cane, and a rotation of these was of little value in preserving the fertility of the soil. To some extent the planters were excusable for not cultivating other crops. Wheat and other small grains were often unprofitable on account of the rust. For many other commodities there was no market. A diversified system of farming demands to a large extent a local market, for many kinds of produce raised under this system, such as vegetables and fruits, will, on account of their perishableness, difficulty of transpor-

[1] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," III: 24–5.

tation, etc., meet with only a local demand. The small urban population of the South, itself largely a result of the difficulty of applying southern labor power to urban pursuits, created very limited local markets. There were in the ten great cotton states in 1850 but seven cities having each 8,000 or more inhabitants, and in 1860 there were but eleven such cities.[1] With the exception of Indian corn, such crops as were raised were produced for the world market. Corn was raised only for domestic use. With bacon it constituted almost the only food used by the slaves and a considerable portion of the whites. As the corn fattened the hogs as well as the negroes, the subsistence of the laboring population was practically conditioned by the supply of this one commodity. This explains its extensive cultivation at the South. But corn was never intended to take the place of cotton as the principal crop. Cotton was given the best lands,[2] and by many planters not enough corn was raised to supply the needs of the plantation.[3]

[1] Preliminary Report of the Eighth Census, 244–6.

[2] Milton Whitney, "Climatology and Soils," in "The Cotton Plant," 143. Professor H. C. White, however, says, that "previous to the civil war, the best lands of the plantations were devoted to food crops." "The Manuring of Cotton," in "The Cotton Plant," 171.

[3] "A belief that cotton and rice are the most profitable crops, has for many years, induced the planters to bend their undivided efforts to the raising of these two staple commodities. The result is excess of production in reference to cotton. . . . It is not probable that the demand for cotton will ever exceed the supply . . . Shall over-cropping, the great bane to good agriculture, still mark the career of the southern agriculturist? [Is it not feasible] for him to realize his present profits, but accompanied with the desirable correlative of food sufficiently abundant at least for domestic purposes? That our practice, hitherto, has not produced those benefits which with a different course of husbandry would be likely to ensue, is demonstrable, in the want of other evidence, solely from the fact, that in 1801, the value of the rice, indigo, and tobacco exported from Charleston, was not much less than the total average value of domestic and for-

Another important reason for the continuance of the "one field" system of agriculture lay in the speculative character of cotton raising. Taken year after year the culture of cotton did not yield such large profits as would have resulted from a diversified system of farming, and it often proved the occasion of loss. Thousands of planters heavily in debt had their crops pledged to the cotton buyers long before they were harvested, possibly even before they were planted.[1]

Notwithstanding these failures, the high prices which resulted when there was a failure of the crop elsewhere, furnished the planter an incentive to continue the "one crop" system, and to rely on his cotton crop to pay off the debts which its exclusive cultivation had brought upon him. "As I have no disposition to gamble, or invest in lotteries, I do not raise cotton," wrote one Arkansas planter who had become disgusted with the speculative character of cotton raising and had gone over to a diversified system of farming.[2]

But it was the ease with which the planter could remove to other lands when the old plantation fields had become exhausted, that furnished the principal reason for

eign productions exported from the whole state from 1824 to 1826, inclusive, whereas an excess of about 50,000,000 lbs. of cotton was raised. . . . [The South Carolina planter] is now, perhaps, the most dependent agriculturist in the Union. For the last five years we have imported 530,000 bushels corn; 100,000 bushels oats; 20,000 bundles hay averaging about 375 lbs. each. At their current value the tribute money of South Carolina has been in five years, on those three articles only, $406,000; the interest of which is sufficient to reclaim permanently upwards of 2,800 acres of the immense area of our swamps." Whitemarsh B. Seabrook, address delivered at the First Anniversary meeting of the United Agricultural Societies of South Carolina, held in Columbia, Dec. 6, 1827. *American Farmer*, X: 95–98. Cf. also, Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," I: 17–18; Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1866, 414; Von Halle, 269.

[1] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 16–17.

[2] Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 420.

the failure to adopt an intensive system of agriculture at the South. The comparatively sparse population of this part of the country, due to the fact that the lack of respect for labor there discouraged immigration, limited the demand for new lands largely to those who were pursuing the system of cultivation by exhausting the old lands. The limited competition for land therefore kept the price down to where it was cheaper to take up these new tracts than to keep up the fertility of the old fields, and this fact permitted the extensive system of cultivation to continue longer without being felt than would have been the case had conditions been otherwise. No planter thought of holding only such land as he wished to cultivate at one time. In taking up a new tract of land, he did it with the intention of cultivating only a part of it and then "turning it out" and bringing into cultivation another portion of the plantation. Of the land in farms in the old cotton states, the Carolinas and Georgia, over 70 per cent. was unimproved in the decade 1850–60, while the New England and Middle States, with less fertile soils, showed approximately two-thirds of their farm lands to be under cultivation.[1] The habit of considering the negro slave rather than the land the investment, made it easy and inexpensive for the planter to remove from one part of the country to the other. Capital and labor were united in the person of the negro slave, and the planter who had once decided to emigrate found it easy to take his property with him.

The part played by compulsory labor in the cultivation of the cotton plant previous to 1860 was so great as to almost completely identify in the mind of the observer the two institutions, the culture of cotton and

[1] Compendium of the Ninth Census of the U. S., 689.

negro slavery.[1] Slave labor was not confined to the cultivation of cotton, it is true. In the rice swamps of Georgia and the Carolinas and on the sugar plantations of Louisiana, slaves did nearly all the work, and they also formed a large proportion of the labor force of the Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia tobacco plantations. But the number of acres devoted to the production of these crops was comparatively small, and the number of negro slaves employed in their cultivation in 1850 was scarcely more than equal to the total number of slaves in the United States in 1790, before the real movement in favor of cotton had begun. The increase in the slave population after 1790 was absorbed mainly by the cotton industry, and we have already noted the wonderful effect which the expansion of this industry had upon the price of slaves.[2]

Although in the majority of cases the planter worked the plantation with his own negroes, the hiring of slaves from their master by the year was not unusual. The price paid varied, of course, not only with the age, sex and working ability of the slave, but also according to the section of the country. By an investigation made by the Bureau of Agriculture at Washington at the close of the war, it was ascertained that the average prices paid for agricultural labor in 1860 were about as follows:[3]

[1] Kapp, "Geschichte der Sklaverei in den Vereinigten Staaten," 101.

[2] Above, pp. 51–2. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 204.

[3] Report of Commissioner of Agriculture, 1866, 416.

	Men.	Women.	Youth.[1]
Virginia	$105	$ 46	$39
North Carolina	110	49	50
South Carolina	103	55	43
Georgia	124	75	57
Florida	139	80	65
Alabama	138	89	66
Mississippi	166	100	71
Louisiana	171	120	72
Texas	166	109	80
Arkansas	170	108	80
Tennessee	121	63	60

Numerous estimates have been made as to the cost of maintaining a slave throughout the year. Obviously there is a wide room for disagreement here, for many varying factors need to be considered. On large plantations the average cost was less than on the small ones. Some planters raised enough corn and made enough pork to feed the negroes throughout the year, while others purchased all or nearly all the food supplies. Some planters furnished twice as much clothing to their slaves as others did. Some planters furnished meat as a regular article of diet. Others furnished it only occasionally. The shelter and clothing required by slaves in the border states was, of course, in excess of that needed in the mild climate of the Gulf states. From observations made and statistics gathered by De Bow, Russell and others, it would seem that on the large plantations the average cost of maintaining a slave throughout the year, including expenditures for clothing, food, tobacco, etc., and the payment of taxes, was not far from $15, and that on the small plantations the expenditures for maintenance of the slaves often

[1] "In the term youth are included children of both sexes, of not less than fourteen years." Rations and clothing are included in the above table. Report of Commissioner of Agriculture, (1866), 416.

amounted to $30 or $40 per capita.[1] Perhaps the average expense for maintenance of the slaves, young and old, throughout the cotton belt, would be not far from $20 per annum.

Merely from a business standpoint it was to the interest of the planter to furnish sufficient food and clothing to his slave to keep him in health and good working order; and suffering for want of food was no doubt a thing of seldom occurrence. This food, however, was of a coarse kind, and though healthy, lacked variety. Olmsted considered it inferior to that furnished prison convicts at the North.[2] From four to six (sometimes as high as ten) quarts of corn meal and a quart of molasses, were usually dealt out to the negroes each week. To this were sometimes added vegetables in their season and usually half a pound of bacon for every able bodied negro.[3] Louisiana was the only state which required by law the furnishing of meat to slaves, and even there it does not seem always to have been observed,[4] although it was generally practiced throughout the South. On most of the plantations the negroes were allowed to cultivate "truck patches," and to raise poultry and sometimes a pig. What produce thus raised they did not themselves consume, they sold, and invested the returns in tobacco, whiskey and Sunday finery.

On some plantations, however, the slaves were not allowed to cultivate these "patches," for it tempted them to reserve for cultivating their gardens in the

[1] De Bow, "Industrial Resources," I: 150, 162. Russell, "North America: Its Agriculture and Climate," 180. Public Documents, VI: (1846), 574.

[2] "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 241. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 248–9.

[3] DeBow, "Industrial Resources," II: 331; Russell, *Op. Cit.*, 166; Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, 180, 240.

[4] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, 241. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 239, note 2, 248.

evening the strength which should have been expended in the cotton field.[1] The hours of work on the cotton plantations were from sunrise to sunset. During the picking season the negroes worked as long as they could see. South Carolina had a statute forbidding the working of slaves for more than fifteen hours a day.[2] Noon "rests" of from one to two hours were not infrequent, though far from universal.[3]

In eastern Georgia and South Carolina the work was performed by "tasks." Each laborer had assigned to him the amount of work which he was expected to do in a day, such as hoeing from one half an acre to an acre of corn or cotton, or picking a certain amount of cotton.[4] When he had finished his task, if there were time left, the slave was allowed to use it as he pleased. This method of "tasking" was greatly preferred by the slave to any other method of working. Many finished their "tasks" by the middle of the afternoon. The slaves were worked in "gangs," and were classed as "full hands," "three-quarter hands," "half hands," and "one-quarter hands," these terms referring to the portion of a "full hand's" work which was required of each slave.[5] "Every negro knows his rate and lawful task so well that if he thinks himself imposed upon by the driver he appeals at once to the master."[6]

[1] *Southern Cultivator*, quoted by Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, II: 239. See also De Bow, "Industrial Resources, II: 331.

[2] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 180.

[3] *Ibid.*, 170-80. Von Halle, 239.

[4] "The task in listing was formerly half an acre; in ridging, three-eights of an acre; and in hoeing half an acre. The present (1844) tasks are less except in hoeing which is the same." Seabrook, "Memoir on the Origin, Cultivation and Uses of Cotton," 24.

[5] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, I: 248-9. Von Halle, 294.

[6] Captain Basil Ball. "Travels in North America in the years 1827 and 1828," II: 231-2.

The "tasks" were set by the drivers, whose business it was to see that they were performed. Drivers were usually selected from among the stronger and more intelligent slaves.[1] White overseers were required by law on each plantation where the owner did not himself personally superintend the work. On the smaller plantations the overseers were also the drivers.

The overseers of the plantation were generally selected from the lower grades of whites and did not enter the best society of the South.[2] They were often of a brutal character. Their wages varied from $200 to $600 a year, but sometimes $1,000 or $1,500 was paid when the planter did not reside on the plantation and the overseer had entire responsibility.[3] The overseer was valued according to the crop which he was able to make,[4] and therefore many of them worked the slaves with little regard to the health and endurance of the latter. Mr. W. W. Phillips of Jackson, Mississippi, one of the most intelligent planters of the South, wrote as follows to an agricultural paper, *The Southern Planter*: "Overseers are not interested in raising children, or meat, in improving land, or improving productive qualities of seed or animals. Many of them do not care whether property has depreciated or improved, so they have made a crop [of cotton] to boast of."[5]

[1] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, I: 249–50. Russell, *Op. Cit.*, 180.

[2] Russell, *Op. Cit.*, 258. "The best overseers ordinarily are young men, the sons of planters who take up the business temporarily as a means of acquiring a little capital with which to purchase negroes for themselves." Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 201.

"The overseers, it should be stated, are seldom southern men, but mostly 'Yankees' from the New England states, or indubitable Scotchmen, gaining their first footing in the world by a mode of life to which their poverty rather than their Calvanism or their education reconciles them." Mackay, "Life and Liberty in America," 176.

[3] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, II: 185. Von Halle, 292–3.

[4] Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 293.

[5] Quoted by Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, II: 187.

The custom of valuing the overseer according to the amount of work which he could get out of the negroes, led to frequent changes in overseers, one being rarely employed more than two years. "Two years of service is sure to spoil them." [1]

It is much easier now, after thirty years experience of free labor in the cotton fields, to judge of the relative advantages of free and slave labor in the cultivation of this staple. The number of free laborers employed prior to 1860 was small, and the conditions of their employment were usually so different from those of slave labor that comparison between the two systems is necessarily imperfect. Yet the opportunities for such comparison were not wholly wanting and the results warrant us in saying that it was a misfortune for southern agriculture that slave labor was ever applied to the cultivation of the cotton plant. As has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, cotton culture offered many and great advantages over other crops for the use of slave labor; but slavery had few, if any, advantages over free labor for the cultivation of cotton. On the sugar and rice plantations on the low marshy coast land, where the climate was unpropitious for whites, there was probably an economy in the use of slavery so long as the colonial system of agriculture was itself profitable and perhaps the same was true of the Mississippi river bottoms. But there were no climatic disadvantages for whites throughout the greater part of the cotton belt, where the use of slave labor was directly responsible for the perpetuation of the "one field" system of agriculture long after that method of tillage had survived its period of usefulness and had succeeded in completely exhausting the fertility of the once productive soils.

[1] Russell, "North America," 258.

Slave labor probably cost absolutely, though not relatively, less than free labor,[1] and the owner had the advantage of absolute control over the laborer's services. But this was more than offset by the lack of interest which the slave took in his work.[2] His low cost of maintenance did not make up for his waste of his master's property. The slave learned methods of agriculture slowly, and he therefore worked best when employed in cultivating only one crop. And as to allow him to remain idle was to lose for the time being the use of almost the entire capital of the planter, it became necessary to furnish employment which should last throughout the year. The cultivation of cotton spread over three-fourths of the year, and, together with the clearing of new lands, furnished continuous employment to slave labor, which the cultivation of the cereals, the raising of grasses, vegetables, fruits, etc., would not have done.[3] The slave, therefore, stood in the way of the adoption of a rotative system of agriculture. While cotton raising by means of slave labor was an industry of increasing or even constant returns, the profits of the planter were invested in new lands and more slaves. When the industry reached that point in diminishing returns where the profits disappeared, the planter, instead of reducing his labor force and landed property for the purpose of adopting an intensive system of farming, found greater profit in breeding slaves for the planters on the still unexhausted western lands.

The one great advantage which Mr. Russell, who seems to have been favorably impressed with the slave system, found in the cultivation of cotton by means of

[1] Russell, "North America," 136.
[2] Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 242–243.
[3] *Ibid.*, 292.

slave labor, was the "organization and division of labor," of which their numbers permitted on the large plantations.[1] This seems to have been a conclusion derived from *a priori* reasoning, rather than from observation, for there were no large plantations worked by free labor previous to the Civil War. But, at most, this statement could have been true for large plantations only, and the general proposition that slave labor was more profitable than free labor would, therefore, rest on the hypothesis that the system of *grande culture* was more profitable for cotton than *petite culture*. Mr. Russell assumed that it was,[2] and as he was logical enough also to hold that the system of growing corn and cotton continuously until the land was so exhausted that it had to be abandoned "to nature for a series of years," was the best system which could be pursued in cotton culture,[3] his assumption based on this premise was doubtless a correct one. But the scientific agriculturists of the South did not agree with Mr. Russell as to the wisdom of the exhaustive system of agriculture, although there were apparently few of them who were willing to ascribe this system to the maintenance of slavery.[4]

Of the free labor which was engaged in the cultivation of cotton, the greater part was of a class which was far from representative of the average intelligence and ability of American agricultural labor. Immigrants were repelled

[1] "North America, Its Agriculture and Climate," 285–6.

[2] *Ibid.*, 284.

[3] *Ibid.*, 268.

[4] See *De Bow's Review*, XXIX: (N. S., IV) 136–151; Gov. Hammond, "Progress of Southern Industry" in De Bow's "Industrial Resources," 24–37; Rev. C. W. Howard, (associate editor of *Southern Cultivator*), "Grasses for the South," Patent Office Report (Agriculture), 1860, 224–239; Edmund Ruffin, "Southern Agricultural Exhaustion and Its Remedy, Patent Office Report (Agriculture), 1852–53, 373–389.

from the South by the stigma cast on labor in a slave region. The majority of the white laborers were of the class of "poor whites," many of them descendants of the "redemptioners," "servants sold for the custom," and "indentured servants" sent into the colonies by Great Britain from the London streets and the debtor prisons. Released from their period of bondage, and finding it impossible to enter the social ranks of the property-holding classes, and with their labor despised because of the association which it had with slavery, these people and their descendants had become the parasites of southern society. Some of them were forced into the mountain region of eastern Tennessee and Kentucky and western North Carolina, and others were left on the abandoned cotton and tobacco lands of the sand hill region of South Carolina and Georgia. Even in the western states they were always found on the poorer lands.[1] These people obtained a scanty subsistence by raising on their depleted soils small quantities of Indian corn, vegetables, and cotton, or quite often by stealing from their wealthier neighbors on the large plantations.[2] In addition to the cotton which they used in their home-spun garments, these small farmers usually raised one or two bales for market. Those among them who had any ambition to advance in the world, purchased a slave as soon as they were able. With one slave secured, it was easy to purchase another on credit.[3]

Yet even with this poor grade of white labor, a considerable quantity of cotton was produced for market,[4] and something is to be said for it if it could afford to

[1] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 291–2.
[2] *Ibid.*, I: 231, 252, 372. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 258.
[3] Russell, *Op. Cit.*, 300. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 259.
[4] Russell, *Op. Cit.*, 285. Report of Commissioner of Agriculture, 1867, 196.

raise cotton on lands on which slave labor was not profitable. Even Mr. Russell recognized that slave labor was only suited to the rich lands, and that in the pine barrens, under the small farming system, free white labor had the advantage.[1] For, in spite of the competition of the large planters, it was by the cultivation of cotton that these small farmers made their profits.[2]

But the best example of the advantages of free labor in the cotton fields, the only example, in fact, which should be taken to fairly compare the two systems, was the cultivation of cotton by the German settlers around New Braunfels, on the plains of Texas. Mr. Russell failed to take account of this, probably because he did not believe that Texas was destined to become a great cotton producing region.[3] This comparison between free and slave labor is eminently fair to slavery, for the two systems here competed on virgin soil, on which slave labor was always employed with its maximum advantage. The small farms worked by the whites were under many disadvantages, due to larger proportional expenses for fencing, for farm implements and animals, and for ginning. The small farmer was also obliged to sell his cotton through middlemen, while the large planter dealt directly with the exporter.[4]

Notwithstanding these disadvantages the Germans prospered in the cultivation of cotton, and although they were only a mere handful in number, they were able to send ten thousand bales of cotton to market in a single year.[5] Their fields were cleaner picked and the work-

[1] Russell, *Op. Cit.*, 285–6, 289, 293–4.

[2] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, II: 267. Cf. Von Halle, *Op. Cit.*, 200.

[3] Russell, "North America," 294.

[4] Olmsted, "The Cotton Kingdom," II: 266–7. Cf. Von Halle, 353–4.

[5] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, 265.

ers showed more skill and intelligence at their work than the slaves who had been reared in the cotton field.[1] The cotton which they sent to market was also better cleaned and baled and was worth from one to two cents more per pound than the cotton cleaned by slave labor.[2] Their methods of cultivation, their lands and farm improvements and their standard of living, were far better than those of their wealthy slave owning neighbors.

The reader will have already understood that the characteristic form of the cotton plantation was the large estate. Not all the large landed properties in the South, however, were confined to cotton culture. Many of the large plantations were already in existence when cotton culture was introduced. Their origin is to be traced partly to the social customs of the early settlers, many of whom were the sons of the English landed gentry; partly to the facilities of commerce offered by the wide and slowly moving rivers in the southern colonies, along whose banks the large plantations were usually to be found; partly to the laws of inheritance existing in the southern colonies; and partly to the nature of the commodities which were raised on these plantations, tobacco, indigo and rice, the cultivation of which required more capital than was possessed by the small farmer. The large plantation owed its existence, most of all, however, to the labor system which existed in the southern colonies where either slave labor or compulsory white labor was the prevailing form. The organization and superintendence of enforced labor was more easy and more economical on the large plantation than on the small one.

[1] Olmsted, *Op. Cit.*, 263.

[2] *Ibid.*, II: 263. Von Halle, 201. The cotton raised by these Germans was known at the North as "free cotton," and was sought after with great avidity by cotton manufacturers.

In spite of the hopes and predictions of many southern writers at the close of the 18th century, the introduction of cotton culture did not result in a change from the large plantation system of agriculture to that carried on on small holdings. The tendency did, indeed, at first seem to be in that direction. The more industrious of the poor whites who had lacked the capital for engaging in the cultivation of indigo or rice, were often led to take up a small holding, and with the aid of their families to engage in the raising of cotton.[1] The abolition of the law of primogeniture in South Carolina and elsewhere, also contributed to the breaking up of the large plantations. Besides in cultivating the sea-island cotton, it had been discovered that there were great profits in developing this grade of cotton to the highest degree possible, and this required intensive cultivation, such as could be carried on only on the small plantation. But notwithstanding these circumstances which seemed favorable to the development of the small estate, the great movement throughout the cotton belt was in the other direction. Cotton culture on large plantations offered great advantages to the slave holder over that of other crops. Such free labor as was to be found in the South was not of a character to push cotton raising on small estates by scientific methods of agriculture. It was easy to continue the old methods. And a system of agriculture which had no regard for the soil found its greatest profit by working as large a body of laborers and cultivating as many acres as could be successfully superintended by one man. The aim was to keep cost of production at a minimum.

For a number of years, therefore, the general tendency was to increase the size of the plantations. "Farms

[1] Ramsay, "History of South Carolina," II: 448–49.

have a tendency to decrease in size more rapidly where the land is poor than where it is rich."[1] In the older states, along the Atlantic coast, as the soil became exhausted, the planters who did not abandon their estates in order to seek out western lands, were forced to reduce the size of their holdings and to begin an intensive system of cultivation. This stage had been reached in the older states a decade before the emancipation of the slaves, and this is evidenced not only by the increased use of fertilizers and the adoption of a better system of agriculture, but likewise by the diminution in the size of farms. In the new states, however, the tendency towards smaller farms was not revealed previous to the Civil War. Not only do we find a failure to adopt improvements in agriculture, but with the exception of the first few years following the settlement of a state, when land speculators were selling out to new arrivals the lands which they had secured, we find the size of farms steadily increasing.

"Our wealthy planters," said Mr. G. C. Clay, a member of Congress from Alabama, in 1853, "with greater means and no more skill are buying out their poorer neighbors, extending their plantations, and adding to their slave force. The wealthy few, who are able to live on smaller profits and to give their blasted fields some rest, are thus pushing off the many who are merely independent."[2] Not until 1850 do we have statistical information as to the size of farms in the cotton growing states. But a comparison of the figures furnished by the reports of this and the following census shows the truthfulness of the above assertions.

[1] Russell, "North America," 35.

[2] Quoted from *De Bow's Review*, by Olmsted, "Seaboard Slave States," 576.