William Watson

Life in the Confederate Army

M & A

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Observations and Experiences of a Foreigner in the South During the American Civil War

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Table of Contents

SECTION I.
THE SOUTH BEFORE THE WAR

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

STATE OF LOUISIANA IN 1860—TOPOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION — SOIL — CLIMATE — PRODUCTIONS — POPULATION CLASSIFIED — INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY.

The State of Louisiana comprises a part of that territory originally called Florida. It was settled by the French and sold by Napoleon to the United States in 1803. It lies to the west of the State which is now called Florida, and from which it is separated by parts of the States of Alabama and Mississippi. It has sometimes been called the sugar bowl of the United States, it being the principal State in which sugar is grown. It is one of the most Southern States in the American Union, and borders on the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippi river runs through it, entering the Gulf of Mexico by one large volume at the Balize and by several small estuaries, or bayous as they are called, the most important of which are Bayou La Fourche, which branches off from the right bank at Donaldsonville, about 220 miles from the mouth, Bayou Plaquemines on the same side about 20 miles further up, and the Atchalafalia branching off near the mouth of Red river.

These bayous or small rivers flow through a rich and level country, and are navigable throughout a considerable part of the year.

The whole of the land along the right or west bank of the river as far up as the State extends, and to where the Ohio river joins it at Cairo, a distance of 900 miles, is flat alluvial

land, and is below the level of the river when in flood at certain seasons of the year, and, before the country was settled, was overflowed when the river rose. To prevent this overflow, high embankments called levees have been formed all along the banks, which have to be kept in good repair and strictly watched when the river is high. Sometimes breaks take place which cause immense damage.

On the left, or east bank, this low alluvial land extends only about 260 miles from its mouth, where the high undulating land begins.

These flat lands are nearly level, but have a slight slope falling away from the river on either side, the drainage leading away from the river and falling into various creeks and bayous leading to the Gulf of Mexico. The lower part of the Mississippi river, for about 250 miles from its mouth, may thus be said to form an immense aqueduct flowing along the crest of a ridge.

These low lands, or bottoms as they are called, being entirely formed by the deposit from the overflow of the river, are very fertile and well adapted for the growth of sugar cane; and in 1860 all along the river as far as this low land extends on the east side, and as far as Red river on the west, the sugar plantations extended.

The high undulating lands produced cotton in abundance, Indian corn, sweet and common potatoes, with fruit, vegetables and live stock in abundance; but the great staple products of the State were sugar and cotton.

The State has also abundance of fine timber, on the lowlands there being enormous swamps heavily timbered with fine cypress, while much of the high and poorer lands are covered with excellent pitch pine, oak, ash, poplar, and other timber.

The climate is hot, though not more so than New York and the other Northern States in summer, but here the summer is longer, and there is very little cold weather. In winter the frosts are slight, and snow is very rare in the southern part of the State. There is a pretty fair supply of rain, though most of it falls in July and August, and in December and January.

The climate is on the whole healthy, although in the swampy districts there is a good deal of "chills and fever," but these are not of a serious nature.

New Orleans has the name of being a most unhealthy city, but this is on account of its being visited sometimes by that fearful scourge, the yellow fever. This disease is not supposed to be indigenous to the place, but is imported from the West Indies or Mexico. It generally appears in July and continues to the end of September, when the first slight frost puts an end to the epidemic, but it also too often proves fatal to any one afflicted with it when the frost appears. Its ravages are confined to New Orleans and the towns along the river, and it never extends into the country, and seldom to any of the towns back from the river. It is only in occasional years that the district is visited by this epidemic, which can be kept out by a strict quarantine.

At all other times the city is very healthy and the mortality much less than might be supposed from the low lying situation and its seeming insanitary position and surroundings.

New Orleans is the great emporium of the South, and is situated on the left bank, fronting the river, about 130 miles from its mouth, and upon the lowland.

The streets of this city are only a few feet above the level of the sea, and the drainage is led to Lake Pontchartrain, which is a branch or arm of the Gulf of Mexico, approaching

to within six miles of the back of the city, the land intervening being low and level, the drainage is elevated and assisted along by water-wheels, driven by steam-engines.

At the time of which I write (1860) there was no through connection between New Orleans and the Northern cities by railway, and the whole of the traffic was by sea, a»d the Mississippi river; and although telegraph communication was established the mails took five or six days to come from New York by an inland route, and the railroads between the Atlantic cities and the Western States, not yet having been fully opened up, the most of the produce of the latter came down the river by means of steamers and flat boats to New Orleans, which was then the great outlet and market of the South-west.

In regard to population, the State of Louisiana had been originally settled by the Spaniards and French, and up till the end of the last century, had been a French colony, a large portion of the population were consequently of French extraction, still retaining their language, manners, and customs, and many of the oldest planters and merchants were of French descent. The great influx, however, from the Northern States and from Europe had considerably overtopped this, and the population of New Orleans became of a mixed character, and at this time might be said to represent every nation in the world.

The principal merchants and planters in the State were descendants of the old French families, men from the North, and other States, with a good many English, Irish, Scotch and Germans.

Of the other portions of the population throughout the State, there were what were called the Arcadians, or small settlers, something like the crofters in the Highlands of

Scotland. These were of French extraction and were located mostly on the low grounds along the river and bayous. Interspersed among the larger planters they lived in rather poor wooden houses; they were not guilty of great ambition; they lived poorly; they cultivated nothing beyond a little Indian corn and vegetables, spent most of their time in hunting and fishing; their wants were small and they were regarded as a contented and inoffensive lot, and were often subjected to the taunting remark that they lived and ate the crawfish which they caught on the river bank and then died, and the crawfish ate them.

Then there were the small farmers who did not aspire to the name of planters. These were mostly located on the higher lands and owned tracts of from 10 to 160 acres, possessing oxen, cows, pigs, poultry, and other live stock, and the never failing supply of native ponies for saddle or spring cart. Part of the land this class cultivated produced Indian corn, fruit, and vegetables, and a few bales of cotton to meet their financial wants. They were mostly natives of the State or of some of the other Southern States. A few of them owned one or two slaves or perhaps a family which they had inherited from their forefathers, but the greater part of them did not own slaves but worked the land with their families or hired help.

Of the mechanic or artisan class, the greater portion of them were natives of the Northern States, or Europeans. These, with clerks and others of similar nationality, constituted a considerable portion of the population.

The labouring classes, of which there was a large number, were located chiefly in New Orleans and the other towns along the river, where they were extensively employed in loading and discharging the numerous steamboats, stowing cotton in ships, and employed about

the cotton presses and other public works, and very largely on the river on barges and steamboats. They were composed mostly of Irish and Germans, and but few of them, after the requisite five years' residence, had failed to pass through the form of getting their naturalisation papers, and in becoming citizens, thereby obtaining the coveted privilege of voting.

But the great ruling power and interest was centred in the "peculiar institution," which was regarded or had at least to be acknowledged as paramount to all other interests—the "institution of slavery."

There has been a great deal said and written on this "institution " for and against it, though I cannot see that on either side much has been said or written from a truly authentic or dispassionate source.

Those who have written condemnatory of it have generally been actuated by a spirit of prejudice against those who maintained it without having any practical or personal experience, or observation; but have based their criticisms on testimony sought for and selected from prejudiced sources. These have portrayed shocking outrages and horrible cruelties which may have been mere tales of tradition or may have been illustrative of something which actually did occur, but of which the accounts were generally so much overdrawn as to show too plainly that they were intended to create a sensation rather than to set forth the actual truth.

If these writers had, with earnest philanthropic motives, sought truly authentic information or taken a temporary sojourn in a slave State where they would have witnessed personally the working of the system, they could have produced irrefutable arguments against slavery of a more practical, plain, and reasonable kind, and which, properly

used, could with the general advancement of modern sentiments have had greater effect towards producing a steady and gradual reform, culminating not only in its abolition but also in obtaining a means whereby the negro might have been provided for either by colonisation or by being trained in the habits befitting an industrious freeman, and without being demoralised by a sudden transition brought about by revolution.

On the other hand those who wrote or spoke in favour of slavery were equally extravagant in the opposite direction, and were either prejudiced by personal interest or in endeavouring to please a party, by meeting fabulous reports and extravagant arguments by reports as fabulous, and arguments equally extravagant.

It might be supposed that any person of ordinary observation and common judgement, residing in a slave State, without having any connection or interest directly or indirectly with slavery, and in every way neutral both in interest or opinion, but having every opportunity of looking on and dispassionately observing the system, would be likely to give an unbiased opinion. There were plenty of such men, and among them men of sound judgement and independent minds, well qualified to give straightforward and unbiased views on the subject, and it seems strange that so many of them were averse to doing so. The general response to any suggestion of this kind was that the subject had become distasteful and disgusting to all calm-reasoning and moderate-minded men, and had already gone into the hands of extremists on both sides. At that time any production on the subject to be patronised must be extreme on the one side or the other. Any honest and truthful statements or calm and dispassionate views would not have been sufficiently sensational to meet the wishes of the

extremists on either side. Men of moderate views had got satiated and disgusted with the subject, and took little interest in the matter, and refused to take the field against opponents with neither of whom any sensible man could wish to have any controversy.

Such was the invariable reply that I have often heard made to any suggestion to the production of any such work.

As one of the disinterested class but without the necessary qualifications, I cannot enter into the merits of this "peculiar institution," as it was then called, and as it then existed, or attempt any criticism of it from a philosophical or sentimental point of view.

I could never see in it the merits of a "Divine institution" for the amelioration and enlightenment of the negro race as claimed for it by those who supported it. Neither can I relate any of the horrible cruelties we read about because I never saw any of them or heard of them except in books or tracts. Nevertheless I do not put this forward as an argument that such things never took place. As for outrages on kindred ties I knew of one case: I happened to see it tried in court. A master had under somewhat exceptional circumstances sold a mother apart from her daughter, the latter having lacked some two months of the prescribed age, which by the law of the State was ten or twelve years (I forget which). For this he was convicted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and to pay a fine of one thousand dollars! This took place in 1855.

I have seen plenty of the "institution," however, which has not appeared in books, but which was in my mind sufficient to warrant some attempt being made towards a change as soon as possible in the system of labour and in the abolition of slavery; I will confine myself, however, to describing what impressions I formed from what came under

my own observation and from my own simple point of view and its connection with the question which gave rise to the civil war. Slavery was at that time a remnant still existing of customs which prevailed in former ages, now happily a thing of the past, and not likely again to be a question for international or domestic legislation.

I have often heard it questioned—and I believe it is open to question—whether, when the abolition movement sprung up in the North, it arose out of pure sympathy for the negro, or whether it was more of a political move for party purposes.

If it arose from the former motives, their personal regard and affection for the negro were certainly not always strictly in keeping with their professed sentiments.

If from the latter motives, it effected its purpose, though at a fearful cost.

I believe it originated from the former motives, but the true sentiments were confined to a very limited number. The vote of this sect, however, became (like the Irish vote) a bid for political parties, and when the Republican party was originated just sufficient of the principle was cautiously ingrafted into its platform to secure the vote of the abolitionists without endangering the support of the greater body who had no sympathy with abolition.

It was an argument of long standing and strongly maintained, not only in the South, but over the whole of the United States, that the negro race were unfitted for any other position than that of the slave. There were undoubtedly some who expressed themselves otherwise and who were no doubt sincere in their convictions, but I question much whether even at the present day there are not a very large number who look upon the negro at least as an inferior race.

If there is any ground for this opinion I have often thought that it is not so much that the negro is unfitted for any other position than that of a slave, as the undoubted fact that there is not in the whole world any other race that is so fitted for the position as the negro. I believe that to take any other race of the most rude and savage nature and place them under the same bondage even with good care and treatment, they would never thrive, and, if they could not revolt against it, would give way to wretched despondency, pine away, and die. The negro can suit himself to the occasion, thrive under it, be contented and happy, "laugh and grow fat," and, under certain circumstances, show some pretensions to polish and even an attempt at gentlemanly manners. All this, of course, is of a kind.

How different with the American Indian who could not be subdued, and whose wrongs so few have sympathised with. I have sometimes in conversation with the Indians introduced the subject of the negro race and slavery, and the invariable response was—"The Indian has a birthright, which the negro has not. The Indian can die, the negro cannot die."

The Southern master made the whole of the negro his study. He studied his mental and physical nature, his wants and his passions, even to some extent to the humouring of his sentiments. They knew what were his pleasures and tastes, and they strove to turn them to the best account. It was the master's interest that the slaves should increase and thrive. They knew the negroes were possessed of human sentiments. They knew these sentiments must have play, and they endeavoured to cultivate those sentiments to suit the slave's position. They encouraged and cultivated his tastes for amusements, of which they knew them to be

fond, songs, music, dancing, balls, and holidays at certain times. All these tended to gratify and smooth their rougher sentiments, occupy their minds, and absorb their thoughts, and leave no room for the intrusion of care or sad reflection.

Other or finer sentiments were no doubt trampled upon, but these were blunted by long usage, and the condition seemed to be accepted as a part of their heritage, and to this state of things their natures had become hardened. The slave was born to the position, he was educated for it, he knew he could not make better of it, and he yielded resignedly to it. The idea of being bought and sold seemed to be a part of his nature, inherited from his earliest origin in Africa, and transmitted with him and to his posterity wherever he might go.

There is certainly not in existence any other race of mankind that could so well have made the best of the unfortunate position, and the way in which they seemed to turn a life of bondage and misery from which they could not extricate themselves, into a life of comparative happiness, showed a certain amount of philosophy of no ordinary kind.

The Southern slaveowners were undoubtedly, of all men who ever had been slaveowners,, the most humane, kind, and considerate in the treatment of their slaves, and especially the real old Southern families who had been settled in the South for generations. If there were cases of cruelty or oppression they were generally to be found among those who had come from the North and other places, with a view of enriching themselves in a short time and returning to their native country, and then, perhaps, becoming pillars of some philanthropic society or institution.

But the real old settlers, who had no ambition beyond making their plantation their home, and maintaining a comfortable independence, regarded their slaves as their

families and it was a cause of considerable grief to a family if any of their negroes became such bad subjects as to require to be severely punished or sold. These planters and their negroes were born together on the plantation; they had played together in childhood. Surplus sons of the planter might branch off to follow some profession, the others as they grew up fell into their respective positions of master and slave (or negro, as it was more popularly termed). Both were contented, and, like many others, they saw themselves and their position in the light of their own eyes and not as others saw them, and they did not understand why any outsiders should interfere with them.

I certainly believe that the Southern planters in general, and particularly the class I have referred to, did not uphold the institution of slavery out of a cruel and heartless design of enriching themselves. They were, I believe, sincere in the belief, however erroneous that might be, that they were the benefactors of the negro in thus taking charge of and compelling him to labour honestly, and to maintain habits of morality in a class which they considered were unable to take care of themselves, and who would if left to themselves soon give way to indolence, immoral passions, and relapse into barbarity.

With regard to the more speculative class of slaveowners who had more recently settled, most of them were from the Northern States, a good many from New England, the seat of the abolition movement, and I have heard it naively insinuated that some of them had come as abolition agents; but thinking that slaveowning would be a better paying business, they became converted to Southern ideas and thought they would try a "spec" in the "peculiar institution." Of course such things were said in joke, though there might be some slight grounds for the insinuation. Be that as it may

they were not considered the kindest of masters, though in general by no means harsh or cruel, still the negroes did not like the idea of being sold to a Yankee master.

As to the question of the negro being an inferior race that is a question for philosophers. By a long residence in the British West Indies I had ample means of judging that the negro as a freeman can be an industrious and faithful labourer or servant, a thrifty and respectable member of society. But it is most rigidly necessary that he must be made to understand.

> '*First.*—That it is the destiny and duty of every man to earn his bread by honest employment.
>
> *Second.*—That he is in a country and among society where this is a necessity and cannot be evaded.
>
> *Third.*—That he is under a law that will be strictly enforced, and which impartially executes justice betwen man and man and between employer and employed.

Let such conditions be fully understood and enforced, and no man need complain of the average negro as an industrious man or a member of society.

But let the agitating self-styled friend of humanity stir up his passions, set before him his great wrongs, his rights as a freeman, the glorious liberty which he, the agitator, has obtained for him, and means to defend him against those who now seek to rob him of his rights; and thus feed his vanity with a consciousness of his own importance, no ear is more open to such seductive flattery. He immediately thinks that he is wronged in having to work at all, and no class of

men can so completely set aside all reason and carry their imaginative ideas to such an incredible extent.

I am well aware that from this cause chiefly arose all the evils which followed the emancipation in the British West Indies when the disgusting indolence, the unreasonable pretension, and the bearding swagger and insolence of the negroes disgusted the civilised world, took away much sympathy, and cast a stigma upon the name of the negro race, which tended to degrade the negro as a freeman, and added force to the belief that he was fitted only for a slave, and to a great extent neutralised the generous act of the British people in their gift of twenty millions to emancipate the slave, by demoralising^ him at the same time.

Thus his pretended friends were his greatest enemies, and did more injury to the negro race than many years of slavery. When we consider the excesses which our own workingpopulation, with all the advantages of civilisation and education can be led into at the present day by the same kind of agitators, we may well excuse the poor ignorant emancipated negro for listening to such flattery half a century ago.

I am fully aware that the well-known state of matters which followed the emancipation in the British West Indies stood greatly in the way of any movement towards the abolition of slavery in the Southern States; and, with the condition of Jamaica before their eyes, a belief that such a course would be disastrous was held not only by the slaveowners but by the population at large, particularly if no provision was made for the disposal of the emancipated negroes. And this belief was. strengthened and resistance to such a measure was still more intensified by the attitude of the New England abolitionists who preached the equality of races and prescribed for the Southern people, politically and

socially, perfect equality with the negro—an equality which they themselves did not accord to him in their own State; and in any case, if there was any aversion to contamination, they knew they were themselves. beyond the reach of that contamination which they prescribed for others. There was no probability of the migration of the negro to starve in the cold climate of New England while he could revel in luxury in the more genial regions of the South.

The policy of the New England agitator I have often heard exemplified by the general people of the South in this way : — "Allowing three different spheres of society and morals, numbers one, two, and three. Number one is completely beyond the reach of contamination with number three; nevertheless he is fond of adulation; he desires to ride high on the philanthropic hobby-horse; he conceives the idea of getting the honour of elevating number three by amalgamating him with number two, so that the better position and higher standard of morals so long striven for, worked for, and attained by number two may be taken from the patient and industrious. number two and equally divided between him and the profligate and thriftless number three —and all this in order that number one may be adulated as a philanthropist, and thus claim to have been the benefactor of, and obtain the gratitude and praise of number three at the expense of number two."

How far such an exemplification may be applicable to this or other similar movements I will not pretend to say, but I have often heard such arguments brought forward by the nonslaveholding population of the South, with most bitter invectives against the Northern agitators, and I merely mention them because I have never seen them put publicly forward in political arguments or outside of the class who expressed them —a class which up to the time of the civil

war seems to have been little known and little represented in the world at large—I mean the non-slaveholding population of the South.

I believe that a large portion of the population of the United States, both North and South, were in favour of abolishing slavery, but the question of disposing, of the negroes and the bugbear of placing the emancipated slaves amongst them, with the example of the British West Indies before them, was the stumbling-block in the way.

While under a democratic government such as the United States, colour would most likely be adopted as a material for the manufacture of political capital, and it would be difficult to adopt a mild code of labour laws such as had been adopted in some parts of the British West Indies some years after the emancipation, and particularly in Trinidad, which, under the wise administration of Lord Harris, were strictly enforced, and tended compulsorily to elevate the moral character of the negro, taught him industrious habits, and greatly improved his condition in life.

So great was the fear of vagabondage by the increase of free negroes in the South that there were restrictions placed upon the emancipating of a slave. No master could emancipate his slave without in some way providing for him within the State or sending him out of it, and many slaveowners on dying bequeathed in their wills freedom to all or certain of their slaves on condition that they emigrated to certain specified countries. Thus, a number of years ago, a Mr. Stephen Henderson, a native of Scotland, died in New Orleans, making a provision in his will that his slaves should be set free and sent to Liberia.

From some dispute about the interpretation of the will, this case was not decided until some years after his death, by which time the slaves had been sold to other masters

under the conditions of the will still pending. When the decision was finally given by the supreme court, it was to the effect that the slaves should be set free on condition that they would emigrate to Liberia. This was immediately made known to the slaves; but they did not care to avail themselves of it. I knew several of the slaves. They seemed to have been the subject of good treatment and were intelligent. They often talked to me on the matter of their old master's will. Unconditional freedom would have been very acceptable to them, but before they would go all the way to Africa they preferred to remain with their present masters.

There was said to have been many peculiar business transactions between Northern men, who posed as abolitionists and philanthropists, and Southern slaveowners, which, if fully enquired into, might have put a very different face on some of the exciting tales put before the world in the gushing language of fanatics. Of these I can give no authentic account, but merely refer to them as current topics among the people generally of the South, and, whether true or not, tended greatly to disgust the non-slavehokling population and to alienate them from the abolitionists of the North.

CHAPTER II.

Table of Contents

SLAVERY AS CONNECTRD WITH THE QUESTION WHICH LED TO THE WAR.

Now as regards the connection of slavery with the question which gave rise to the civil war in America, I doubt much whether this has ever been regarded in its actual and true light.

If we are to accept the theory which some have presumptuously sought to advance that the South was fighting to maintain the institution of slavery, while the North was fighting to abolish it, it would be reasonable to suppose that the institution must have been very generally popular in the South and of universal benefit to all classes.

That this was not the case it is easy to show, for it was but a small minority of the people who derived any benefit directly or indirectly from the institution of slavery.

But a still more striking feature is, that it appeared to be maintained by a system which seemed strangely anomalous in a country and among a people whose chief boast was their freedom of speech and sentiment, while one word against this cherished institution would subject the utterer to the grossest maltreatment, banishment, or perhaps death. These retaliations, if not inflicted, were at least tolerated and endorsed by men whose interests were in no way benefited, but rather injured by slavery, and who were at the same time of sufficient number to have had it abolished within the State.

This state of things I have heard most justly and strongly commented upon, but never sufficiently accounted for. I found it to have originated from the following cause: While freedom of speech and sentiment was the acknowledged law of the land, the abuse of this privilege, which has sometimes been curtailed in other countries by an edict from the sovereign, could not in democratic America be suppressed except by the usual resources of a popular movement. From this popular movement arose the nefarious system of retaliation so justly condemned.

There is in all countries that pest of society, the unprincipled agitator, who, possessing some "gift of the gab," contrives to prey upon the credulity of the ignorant, and, to accomplish his own purpose, stirs up strife and discontentment among the industrial classes, and to these demagogues the ignorant negroes of the South offered a tempting field; and had they been allowed to exercise their unscrupulous designs among the slaves, the consequences might have been serious; and as by the statute nothing could be done to suppress the "freedom of speech," the people had no other way to prevent disturbance or insurrection than to have recourse to a system of popular repression, and to inflict summary punishment on the offenders.

Unfortunately the matter did not end here. These agitators when they saw before them what they dreaded most of all, the terrors of Lynch law, they as quickly turned round and became the champions and guardians of slavery, became loudest in their denunciations of the abolitionists, and with the view of obtaining the support and patronage of the slaveholders, were always ready to take an active part in inflicting punishment on anyone whom they could accuse of uttering an expression against the interests of the

institution of slavery. Hence arose that terrorising system which became the curse of every community where slavery existed.

Many arguments had been raised against slavery beyond the limits of the States where it prevailed. Many books had been written condemnatory of it and detailing its horrors, but unfortunately most of these were absurdly exaggerated, and being more sentimental than accurate they tended rather to strengthen and maintain the evil than to pave the way for its abolition by those who had, or ought to have had, the immediate power to deal with it. These, I may say, were the population in the States where it existed.

The institution of slavery was recognised and provided for in the original constitution of the United States, and on the principle of State sovereignty had only been and could only be dealt with by the legislature of the State in which it existed; the Federal Congress had no power to deal with it or legislate upon it without first amending the constitution of the United States. This they could not do without a majority of twothirds of both Houses, and this majority they had never been able to obtain.

The total number of States in the Union at the outbreak of the war was thirty-three, and the total population about thirty-five million. The total number of States in which slavery was recognised and lawful, was fifteen. In one of these—Delaware—slavery was very little practised, and was gradually dying out. In three other States—Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—it was gradually being done away with, although they still maintained and upheld the principle. It may thus be said that only in eleven States was slavery in full power. These States had a population of about nine millions. Within these eleven States there was a total of a little over two hundred thousand of the population who

owned slaves, and these included a large number who were not citizens, and who had no voting powers, such as females and unnaturalised foreigners of whom there were a considerable number. Though we may make every allowance for their families and adherents, and all others who might derive benefit, or were directly or indirectly interested in the " institution," there was still a large majority whose interests were in no way promoted but rather prejudiced by it. These latter were also largely composed of single men without families and without property, but who possessed the voting power, and the fighting power, if necessary.

How in the face of this could an institution so prejudicial to so great a majority of the population, and so distasteful to many, not only be so long maintained, but that to preserve it the people should withdraw from a union they had always cherished with an almost sacred reverence, and involve themselves in a desperate war, in which they knew the chances against them were as three to one, would puzzle many to answer, and I have never heard anyone give what seemed to me a proper explanation of it.

Slavery was detrimental to the interests of the small farmers and settlers, because in raising their cotton by free labour they had to compete against the wealthy slaveowner with his slavegrown produce. It was detrimental to the interests of the labouring classes, because they had at all times to submit to the employers' terms, otherwise their places would be immediately filled by hired slaves.

The institution was detrimental to the interests of the various grades of mechanics and artisans, insomuch that most determined efforts were often made by slaveowners to have the more intelligent negroes taught trades, which greatly enhanced their value, even though they should be

but indifferent workmen. It was also a common practice with master tradesmen to purchase likely negro lads, teach them trades, and so make them (the masters) more independent of free workmen, while planters, having a great desire to be independent of white or free skilled labour, would purchase a slavemechanic, paying for him from three to four times the price of an ordinary hand. Thus a master mechanic might purchase a slave for 800 or 1000 dollars, keep him four or five years, teach him his trade, have his work all that time, and then sell him for three or four thousand dollars.

This was particularly the case with such trades as coopers, carpenters and bricklayers, and led to frequent disputes between master tradesmen and their workmen. Combination among workmen was not at this time very far extended but was increasing, and some of the newspapers were bold enough to cautiously approach the subject and to throw out mild words of warning. In some of the larger foundries and engineering works a rule had been established that no slave should be employed in any capacity, and, in others, in no other capacity than that of a labourer.

The relation between the planter or wealthy slaveowner and the artisan was somewhat sensitive. The slaveowner had no high regard for the artisan and would have been very glad if he could have done without him. As that could not be, and the artisan class could be a powerful factor in the control of pubnc affairs, it behoved the slaveowner to treat the artisan with all the deference and respect he could afford.

It might not be out of place, and perhaps not altogether uninteresting, for me to relate an incident and conversation in which I took part, as illustrative of the kind of feeling which existed between the mechanical or artisan class and

the wealthy planter and slaveowner, and the views of the latter on and their objections to emancipation.

The following incident and conversation took place in 1859: —Mr. C. was a wealthy sugar-planter; his estate and sugar manufacturing works were extensive; he had superior vacuo apparatus for the manufacture of a high quality of sugar; his large amount of machinery entailed upon him the necessity of employing skilled engineers, with whom he seemed to have had frequent controversies. There would no doubt be faults on both sides, but Mr. C. had the name of being somewhat proud and arrogant, and not very popular among the artisan class, whilst he, perhaps not without some reason, had conceived a hearty hatred for all classes of mechanics in general. He at last, however, as he imagined, got over his troubles and *was.* now happily independent within himself. He had been able to purchase, at an enormous price, a slave who was not only educated, but a thoroughly learned engineer, and a perfect expert in that class of machinery. Mr. C. was now jubilant, because he was at last independent of these professionals who. had given him so much annoyance; and the subject of a good deal of chaff and merriment amongst that class was of Mr. C. and his "sciencedd nigger."

Unfortunately, however, in the very middle of the sugarmaking season, Mr. C.'s apparatus got out of order, and in such a way that tons of sugar were being lost by escaping into the engine pond, and the cause of the disarrangement could not be discovered. Mr. C. and his engineer tried hard to find out the defect, but without success. As the loss was enormous, Mr. C. was in an awkward position. He disdained to apply to the regular practising engineers, who, he now feared, would turn the laugh against him. Eventually, he came to the senior

partner of our firm, and consulted him as to getting an expert to try and find out and rectify the defect. I was immediately sent for as possessing some knowledge that way. I was ready to go at once, but having heard so much of the man, I stipulated upon a proper understanding before I went, which was that if I discovered the defect and rectified it, he should pay me a hundred dollars. If I failed to discover the defect and rectify it, I should charge nothing; this was agreed to.

From my experience in such things, and from the description he gave, I had a very good idea of what would be the matter, having seen and rectified several similar cases before. On my arriving on the plantation, I found it to be, as I expected, a very trifling thing, which could be rectified in a few minutes, but away in a hidden part of the apparatus. I took care that no one should see what was wrong or what I rectified, and having ordered them to turn on steam and start the apparatus, everything was all right and going well within half-an-hour.

In the meantime Mr. C., who had been out of sight for some time, came up. When he saw everything going on well he looked surprised, but made no remark. He examined and tested again and again the discharge water to see that it was free from sugar.

"Is all right now?" he asked me. I nodded assent. He walked nervously back and forward for some time with a mingled expression of satisfaction and disappointment, while, I must confess, I stood with an ill-concealed look of triumph and suppressed merriment which no doubt slightly irritated him. Having examined everything carefully and satisfied himself that all was now right, he came up to me and handing me a roll of bank notes, said in a gruff tone, "Count and see if that is right." Having counted and found

the hundred dollars all right, I asked if he wanted a receipt for it. "No," said he in the same tone, "I always trust to a man's honour."

"You are very prompt in your payment, Mr. C.," said I.

"Yes, Mr. W.," said he, in a more deliberate tone, "because when I make a bad bargain I always wish to get done with it as soon as possible." I saw from this that he was inclined for an argument.

"And do you consider," said I, "that the bargain you made with me to-day is a bad bargain?"

"Well, if to pay a man a hundred dollars for half-an-hour's work is not a bad bargain I don't know what is."

"Oh very well," said I laughing, "I will give you back your hundred dollars and put your apparatus as it was, and you can send your sugar into the engine pond as before."

"Oh no, stop there," said he, "that is where you take the advantage. It is the same story with all you mechanical men; that is where I say you are unreasonable."

"Oh now, Mr. C.," said I, "you wish to bring up that old vexed question between planters and mechanics, and I don't wish to enter into it; so if you will order them to bring out my horse I will start for home."

"I shall order them to do nothing of the kind," said he; "you shall come over first and take your dinner, and then after that you can go where you please."

"Is your dinner worth eating?" said I.

"Well, it is just what I have for myself; we hard-working men in the country can't afford to live as high as you gentlemen mechanics do in the city."

"Mr. W.," said he in a more serious tone as we walked towards the house; "I know that I don't get a very good name among the artisan class, and particularly since I bought this man to take charge of my machinery. But you