



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07591279 4

Historic Sketches
of
The South

Emma Langdon Roche

1. Slave Trade - U.S.

2. Slavery - U.S. - Alabama



1 ED
2 AH

Shows





SEK,

10/10

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R J L



Drawn by Emma Roche.

Abaché.

Sketches of
South

Sketches

Sketches

Sketches



Historic Sketches of the South

By

Emma Langdon Roche

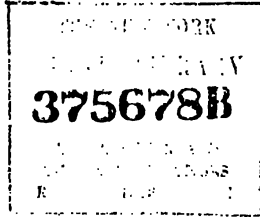
Drawings and Photographs by Author

The Knickerbocker Press

New York

1914

MRS



COPYRIGHT
BY
EMMA LANGDON ROCHE
1914

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN SLAVERY	I
II. EARLY LEGISLATION AGAINST THE SLAVE TRAFFIC	19
III. ILLEGAL TRAFFIC IN SLAVES	49
IV. PREPARATIONS FOR "CLOTILDE'S" VOYAGE	65
V. THE CAPTURE OF THE TARKARS	74
VI. VOYAGE OF THE "CLOTILDE"	84
VII. THE RETURN	92
VIII. THE TARKARS AT DABNEY'S PLANTA- TION	98
IX. TARKAR LIFE IN AMERICA	103
X. IMPRESSIONS OF ALABAMA IN 1846 ¹	129

Clotilde Foster Feb. 12, 1946

¹ Reprinted from "South Atlantic Quarterly," July, 1908.



ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
ABACHÉ <i>Frontispiece</i> Drawn by Emma Roche.	
POLEETE Drawn by Emma Roche.	73
ABACHÉ AND KAZOOLA	79
MAP DRAWN BY KAZOOLA	89
KAZOOLA Drawn by Emma Roche.	97
WRECK OF THE "CLOTILDE."	103
CHARLEE	109
OLOUALA Drawn by Emma Roche.	117
CHARLEE, HEAD OF THE TARKARS Drawn by Emma Roche.	127
KAZOOLA	131
ZOOMA, THE LAST TARKBAR (1) Tarkar Village. (2) Dahomey's Land. (3) Wavering line showing stealthy march of Dahomey- ans through forest. (4) Route by which captive Tarkars were taken to the sea. (5), (6), (7), (8), Eko, Budigree, Abaché, Whydah, towns through which Tarkars passed. (9) River. (10) Beach and sea.	139



Historic Sketches of the South

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN SLAVERY

To fully understand the opposition of thought wherein our "irrepressible conflict" had its inception and lay so long in embryo, to burst forth at last in the awful and bloody travail of a nation divided and at arms, some knowledge of the history and psychology of the peoples who settled the American colonies is necessary; for a nation's cataclysms are not spontaneously generated, but are the result of forces which though for generations are silent and hidden are gathering strength under the evils of superstition, oppression, or fanaticism, and only need such an explosive as the tongue of a Danton, Robespierre, Garrison, Beecher, or Stowe to hurl the people into death and desolation.

2 Historic Sketches of the South

The early settlers who have left their impress on American life and character were of the same country and traditions, but their manners and ideals had been developed by the opposing forces which began to stir England during the Renaissance—a hundred and fifty years before the Reformation—forces of which our own Civil War seems as direct a sequence as were the religio-political feuds of the 16th and 17th century England. In the New World the exponents of these contrasting forces were divided for the first century and a half by what afterwards became known as Mason's and Dixon's Line and by vast areas of uninhabited wilderness.

Virginia was no Mecca for the religiously or politically oppressed, but drew to her soldiers of fortune—men impelled by a spirit of adventure, or those who for some delinquency wished to lose their identity in the vast, unknown New World; among them were many gentlemen who more often than not possessed the vices and follies of a corrupt age. The first who became permanent settlers were divided on the outward voyages by jealousies and dissensions. These differences were carried

Beginnings of American Slavery 3

into the colony; aggravated by the greed and selfishness of those placed in authority, they became greater hardships than the illness, starvation, and Indian treacheries which hampered early progress. There were "poor gentlemen, Tradesmen, Servingmen, libertines, and such like, ten times more fit to spoyle a Commonwealth, than either begin one, or but helpe to maintain one. For when neither the feare of God, nor the law, nor shame, nor displeasure of their friends could rule them here, there is small hope ever to bring one in twenty of them ever to be good there. Notwithstanding, I confesse divers amongst them, had better mindes and grew much more industrious than was expected." ¹ Amid treacheries and deceits, John Smith stands forth a hero. Through his thought and action the colony not only survived the vicissitudes of fire, starvation, and massacre, but was saved from itself, for the evils of its own lawless, disturbing elements were greater dangers than those which came from without. The hope of gold was ostensibly the colony's *raison d'être*: "The worst of all was our gilded refiners with

¹Smith's *Historie of Virginia*.

4 Historic Sketches of the South

their golden promises made all men their slaves in hope of recompenses; there was no talke, no hope, no worke, but dig gold, wash gold, refine gold, loade gold, such a bruit of gold, that one mad fellow desired to be buried in the sands least they should by their art make gold of his bones." This search for gold proved futile; in 1615 the land was parceled off to each settler in fifty-acre lots, tobacco was planted, and thus began Virginia's prosperity.

Tobacco was introduced into Europe by the first Columbian voyagers and into England by Raleigh and Drake. Despite the strong social and religious pressure—even King James instituting a *propaganda* which led him to write the *Counterblast to Tobacco*—the habit spread with alarming rapidity, and was not confined to the men alone; chewing and smoking were indulgences common to the older women, while snuff was the favorite with the younger ones. This new taste created a demand which increased Virginia's population and greatly extended her cultivated fields. Women were scarce, and the planters growing rich had a natural desire to return to England.

Beginnings of American Slavery 5

This, however, was obviated by the importation of widows and virgins who were shipped to the colony as any other cargo. The nature of this bartering, which is unique in American history, may best be described from a letter, dated August 21, 1621, which accompanied one of these cargoes of colonial dames: "We send you in this ship one widow and eleven maids for wives for the people of Virginia. There hath been especial care had in the choice of them, for there hath not any one of them been received, but upon good recommendations.

"In case they can not be presently married, we desire that they be put in several households that have wives, till they can be provided with husbands. There are near fifty more which are shortly to come, are sent by our most honorable lord and treasurer, the Earl of Southampton (the patron of Shakspeare), and certain worthy gentlemen, who taking into consideration that the plantations can never flourish till families be planted, and the respects of wives and children fix these people on the soil, therefore have given this fair beginning for the reimbursing those charges. It

6 Historic Sketches of the South

is ordered, that every man that marries them give one hundred and twenty pounds of the best leaf tobacco for each of them.

“Though we are desirous that the marriage be free according to the law of nature, yet we would not have these maids deceived and married to servants, but only to such freemen or tenants as have means to maintain them. We pray you, therefore to be as a father to them in this business not enforcing them to marry against their wills.”

Labor for the ever-increasing fields was another problem confronting the planter. King James decided that the London Company should solve this by transporting to Virginia English convicts, who thus removed from old environments and temptations might form a valuable industrial asset. Only one shipload of a hundred was sent, for about the same time a Dutch man-of-war arrived at Jamestown (August, 1619) and twenty negro slaves were sold to the planters. Qualms about such a transaction could scarcely be expected, for through all historic times it was only as a slave that the negro had been associated with other races. In ancient times he had been sub-

Beginnings of American Slavery 7

servient to the Egyptians, bought for the Carthaginian galleys; slave to Assyrian, Arabian, Indian, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman; and in early Christian centuries sold by the Venetians to the Moors of Spain.*

* "Their features are recorded by their ancient enemies, never by themselves. Egyptian kings, who from earliest times of antiquity, came often into collision with the blacks, and had them figured as defeated enemies, as prisoners of war, and as subject nations bringing tribute. Their grotesque features, so much differing from the Egyptian type, made them a favorite subject for sculptural supports of thrones, chairs, vases, etc.; or painted under the soles of sandals, of which instances abound in museums as well as in the larger works on Egypt. . . . The other artistical nations of antiquity knew little of the negro race. They did not come before Solomon's epoch into immediate and constant contact with it. We see soon after, however, a negro in an Assyrian battle scene of the time of Sargon, at Korsabad. He might have been exported from Memphis by Phoenician slave-dealers to Asia, where he fell fighting for his master against the Assyrians. . . . On the remarkable relief of the tomb of Darius Hystaspes, at Persepolis, we have the negro as a representative of Africa. The Greeks seldom drew the blacks; still, on beautiful vases of the British Museum, we meet with the well known negro features in a battle scene. Another such vase with the representation of Hercules slaying negroes has been published by Mecali. Etruscan potters, who liked to draw Oriental types, molded vases in the shape of a negro head and coupled it sometimes with the head of white males or females. The British Museum contains several of these very characteristic utensils. . . . We possess effigies of negroes drawn by six different nations of antiquity: Egyptians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Etruscans and Romans, from about the eighteenth century B.C. to the first centuries of our era, which all speak for the unalterable constancy of the negro type such as in our day."—Nott and Gliddon's *Indigenous Races of the Earth*.

8 Historic Sketches of the South

When the existence of new lands became known and labor was needed for their development, the negro's native country became a hunting ground where he was not only stalked by the Dutch and Portuguese, but by the French and English who also had posts for that purpose in Africa. In fact the English, including therein the colonists of New England, became more extensively engaged in the traffic than all other slave-trading European nations combined. Compunctions about slavery as about many other things came only with the moral awakening of a later generation. "Scarcely any one seems to have regarded the trade as wrong. Theologians had so successfully labored to produce a sense of the amazing, I might almost say general, difference between those who were Christians and those who were not, that to apply to the latter the principles that were applied to the former, would have been deemed a glaring paradox. If the condition of the negroes in this world was altered for the worse, it was felt that their prospects in the next were greatly improved. Besides, it was remembered that, shortly after the deluge Ham had behaved disrespectfully to his drunken

Beginnings of American Slavery 9

father, and it was believed that the Almighty had, in consequence, ordained negro slavery."¹ The utility of the negro being at once proven, African slavery had become something of an institution in Virginia, before the *Mayflower* with its handful of men, women, and children landed on Plymouth Rock.

The stern, uncompromising attitude of these people in whom there was no quibbling with right or wrong as they perceived it, which gave them the physical courage to endure persecution, mutilation, and even death, was the result of the religious agitations which began in England with Wycliffe and were directed against the oppressions and corruptions which flourished within the Church's powerful organization. Though suppressed, the leaven had sifted down to the people who, stultified by centuries of grossest superstition, had silently and patiently borne the yoke. In the stirrings of this religious Renaissance the book that reached them was Wycliffe's translation of the Bible; this gave to them the Semitic conception of God—the one God—which the voices of those

¹ Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*.

10 Historic Sketches of the South

“primitive Puritans the Prophets” had saved from the obliterating dangers of idolatry and superstition. The stolid somberness of the Northern races responded to the majestic swing of this wonderful collection of Hebrew documents which traced a people’s struggles and thought development. Some of its characters as Huxley says of “Jepthah, Gideon, and Sampson are men of the old heroic stamp, who would look as much in place in a Norse Saga as where they are.” Stray chapters sometimes came into the possession of some yeoman who was fortunate enough to read; in silence and secrecy, when the day’s work was done, there would gather round him eager listeners. To know what this book’s message meant to them, one needs but read their subsequent history. To hear it, possess it, and believe it, they suffered the diabolical tortures and fiendish perpetrations which at once made martyrs and tyrants of men, and which laid in England the foundation of what Ranke calls the “heroic age of Protestantism in Western Europe.” Of this breed were the Pilgrims of Plymouth Rock. Their inherent independence had been fostered by a long exile in Leyden; there

Beginnings of American Slavery 11

the old Teutonic spirit of freedom had survived, and had given her men that sublime courage and determination, when besieged by the Duke of Alva and starving, "that rather than yield they would devour their left arms to enable them to continue the defense with their right."¹ Leyden afterwards became a haven for those of other countries who, breaking from prescribed thought, dared to act accordingly. It was also a university center; political and religious tenets were subjects of common debate. Robinson who became one of the Pilgrim fathers took an active part in these discussions.

To these exiles the New World became a hope. Though homeless, they were loyal to James. While petitioning the London Company for lands, they begged of him the freedom to there worship God according to their own consciences. Though this was not actually granted it was permitted. An unkindly fate seemed to preside over their voyage—buffeting storms drove them farther north than their proposed destination; some historians state they were purposely steered out of

¹ Ranke, *History of the Popes*.

12 Historic Sketches of the South

their course by their Dutch pilot, and were forced to land on Plymouth Rock.

By a solemn covenant entered into aboard ship, they agreed that while they would be faithful to the English Crown, the polity they would establish among themselves would be an ideal state—a community of interests—fascinating as expounded by Plato, More, and Rousseau, but unfeasible for human nature as yet evolved since complete barbarism. United by a common faith—gloomy, austere—putting aside as mortal sin all the joys of life—forced to endure together in a wild, bleak, strange land, starvation, disease, frightful cold, and the terror of hostile Indians, by whom they would have probably been exterminated had not a deadly pestilence broken out among these savages—possibly no better opportunity for such an experiment has ever been offered civilized man. But among them too was the natural inequality of individuals which will probably always render futile and unenduring similar sociological experiments.

The Puritan settlements were gradually augmented by the persecuted from their native land,

Beginnings of American Slavery 13

and it would seem that they could at last possess the religious security and contentment for which they had so long clamored, but dissent had become second nature; combativeness seemed essential to zeal, and as there was no Established or Roman Church at which to hurl themselves, their own tenets became mooted points; bitter differences arose. They showed themselves as intolerant in the New World as they had been intolerable in the Old, and those without the might to prove their right were driven forth. In this manner Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire were settled. Much of their later history has to do with religious bickerings, mutilations, and witch-burnings. It was an outgrowth of this same spirit which confronted the South for thirty years before the final rupture which resulted in the War of Secession.

Thus from the beginning the North and the South were necessarily distinctive; settled under different circumstances, the one drew from England the stern, severe, and rigorously religious, while the other became the habitat for the Puritan's opposite—the impecunious gentleman, the roistering

14 Historic Sketches of the South

cavalier, the insolvent debtor, and the Catholic nobleman—a class in which there had been a very general “reversion from virtuous and noble manhood to the lewdness of the ape and the cunning ferocity of the tiger.”¹ In the New World all alike were brought face to face with a great, overshadowing nature which presented the diversified physical conditions along which each section’s economic development would tend. Agriculture in austere New England would have been a too uneven wrestling with nature; existence wrought from the soil meant unending toil and often heart-breaking disappointment, so the New Englander’s pursuits became mercantile and seafaring—occupations in which the negro could be of little value, but following England’s initiative he found the slave-trade profitable, and the Southern planter a ready buyer. To repress Nature’s exuberance, the fields of tobacco, cotton, rice, indigo, and cane required man’s watchful care, and the negro, inured through all previous generations to the sun and rain, the jungle and the swamp, properly directed,

¹ Dean Farrar.

Beginnings of American Slavery 15

became, and still is, the ideal laborer for work of the soil.

Since then our "mental endyses" have been many; we have associations for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and sympathetic and indignant thrills pass through us at sight of ill-treatment to one of these, so we cannot bring our attitude of to-day or of the last hundred years to judge the beginnings of American slavery. To 16th and 17th century Europeans it was palpable that the difference between the negro and the man-like apes was no greater than that existing between the negro and themselves, and it was debatable "with that brutishness which commonly appeareth in all their actions whether the people generally may be thought to be men in the skins of beasts; or beasts created in the likenesse and shape of man."¹ The sentimentality which obtained some years ago and which led to such bitter hatred and misunderstanding seems almost maudlin when that phase of the question in which the indescribable wretchedness of the negro in his native land is considered—his gross and pitiable

¹ Heylyn's *Cosmographie*, 1657.

16 Historic Sketches of the South

superstitions, his indifference to death and his regard for cruelty as a virtue; what slavery did for him seems analogous to what we suppose primitive man accomplished with the wolf—adopted it from the wild and made of it a faithful, domestic animal. True, the motives were utility and gain, but who can deny the mighty uplift in value and sagacity, both for the dog and the negro? Among the African tribes described in Pigafetta's account of Lopez's *African Travels* (1598), and spoken of by Heylyn in his *Cosmographie* (1657), are the Anziques, "the cruellest Cannibals in the world; for they do not onely eat their Enemies, but their friends and Kinsfolk. And that they may be sure not to want these Dainties, they have shambles of man's flesh, as in other parts of Beef and Mutton. So covetous withall, that if their Slaves will yield but a penny more when sold joynt by joynt than if sold alive, they will cut them out, and sell them upon the shambles. Yet with these barbarous qualities they have many good . . . of great fidelity to their masters and to those which trust them, that they will rather choose to be killed than either abuse the trust, or betray their Masters. For

that cause more esteemed by the Portugals than other Slaves." So even the most bloodthirsty possessed potentially the quality of faithfulness, which when he was removed from his natural environment—where for thousands of years he had not progressed—made all his later development possible, and which aside from the cases where there has been an infusion of white or Indian blood, is largely responsible for what the best type of American negro is to-day. It was this quality, fostered by care and kindness, that has filled Southern tradition with touching and oftentimes heroic incidents of the slave's devotion. When the old differences of Puritan and Cavalier, under other guises, called men to arms, it was to the fidelity of these blacks that the Southerner trusted wife, children, and home. That this trust was seldom violated is sufficient encomium for master and slave. Under the régime established in many places, after emancipation had converted the "slave from a well-fed animal into a pauperized man" (Huxley), when he was incited to open rebellion and nameless atrocities, to what sorrows would the desolated South have been subjected, had the

18 Historic Sketches of the South

old status of master and slave been different? Had the South been guilty of the charges laid to her door, despite Klu-Klux Klans and other precautions, the negro's temper would have been much the same as that of the French canaille, who during the Commune "drank blood to vomit crime." They had shown, in the San Domingo insurrections, that revenge lay within their nature.

CHAPTER II

EARLY LEGISLATION AGAINST SLAVERY

THE Cavalier and adventurer in working out their destiny in the New World became purged of the foibles that continued to debauch their compeers in England; among their descendants of a few generations were those men of unimpeachable honor and integrity of purpose who will be held forever as the highest types of American chivalry and manhood. Those of Virginia, with whom colonial slavery was most ancient, were the first to be aroused to the full ethical significance of the evil—to the grave injustice to the unfortunate lower race, and to the detriment to the moral nature of the higher. They were the first to attempt to legislate against the evil. In 1770, Virginia protested against the importation of slaves, but to no avail as royalty itself was financially interested in the traffic. At the meeting of the delegates from each county of Virginia held

20 Historic Sketches of the South

at Williamsburg in August, 1774, to consider British oppression and indignities, the second article of the protest resolved and agreed upon bore upon the slave traffic: "We will neither ourselves import nor purchase any slave, or slaves, imported by any person, after the first day of November next, either from Africa, the West Indies, or any other place." This meeting was a full one, and among the one hundred and eight signers—all prominent in Virginia life and annals—are Peyton Randolph, Richard Henry Lee, George Washington, Benjamin Harrison, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Marshall, Thomas Randolph, and Francis Lightfoot Lee. The instructions of Thomas Jefferson, with whom the abolition of slavery was always a great aim, to the Virginia delegates to the first Congress (August, 1774), voiced the sentiments of Virginia's most thoughtful men: "For the most trifling reason, and sometimes for no reason at all, His Majesty has rejected laws of the most salutary tendency. The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies, where it was, unhappily introduced in their infant state. But

Early Legislation against Slavery 21

previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves we have, it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa. Yet our repeated attempts to effect this, by prohibitions, and by imposing duties which might amount to a prohibition have been hitherto defeated by His Majesty's negative; thus preferring the immediate advantage of a few British corsairs to the lasting interests of the American States, and to the rights of human nature deeply wounded by this inhuman practise."

Not only was every effort of the Southern colonists opposed by England's monarch, but with the breaking out of open hostilities his agents were commissioned to arm and instigate the slaves against their masters.¹ Many lured by the promise of land and freedom flocked to the British standard; they were sent into Nova Scotia. Suffering from cold and becoming discontented by the non-fulfillment of the promises of aggran-

¹ "You may observe, by my proclamation, that I offer freedom to the blacks of all rebels that join me, in consequence of which there are between two and three hundred already come in, and those I form into corps as fast as they come in, giving them white officers and non-commissions in proportion."—Letter from Lord Dunmore to General Howe, dated Williamsburg, Va., Nov. 30, 1775.

22 Historic Sketches of the South

dizement, they were finally sent to Sierra Leone, which in the following seventy-five years received the thousands taken by the British from the slavers.

During this fearful crisis, Virginia's spirit towards these misguided people was one of mercy and humanitarianism. At the next convention it was resolved: "Whereas Lord Dunmore, by his proclamation, dated on board the ship *William* off Norfolk, the 7th day of November, 1775, hath offered freedom to such able-bodied slaves as are willing to join him, and take up arms against the good people of this colony, giving encouragement to a general insurrection, which may induce a necessity of inflicting the severest punishments upon these unhappy people already deluded by his base and insidious arts, and whereas, by an act of the general assembly now in force in this colony, it is enacted, that all negro, or other slaves, conspiring to rebel or make insurrection, shall suffer death, and be excluded all benefit of clergy—we think it proper to declare, that all slaves who have been, or shall be seduced by his lordship's proclamation, or others to desert their masters'

Early Legislation against Slavery 23

service and take up arms against the inhabitants of this colony, shall be liable to such punishment as shall hereafter be directed by the convention. And to the end that all such, who have taken this unlawful and wicked step, may return in safety, to their duty, and escape the punishment due their crimes, we hereby promise pardon to them, surrendering themselves to Colonel William Woodford or any other commander of our troops, and not appearing in arms after the publication hereof. And we do further earnestly recommend it to all humane and benevolent persons in the colony, to explain and make known this offer of mercy to those unfortunate people."

About this time, some feeling against American slavery, but more against the "aristocratic spirit of Virginia and the Southern colonists," stirred England, and a general enfranchisement of the slaves was proposed. Edmund Burke, in his famous speech of March 22, 1775, on the "Conciliation with America," touches on the incongruity of such a proposition of freedom coming from England: "Slaves as these unfortunate black people are, and dull as all men are from slavery, must they

24 Historic Sketches of the South

not a little suspect the offer of freedom from that very nation, one of whose causes of quarrel with those masters is their refusal to deal any more in that inhuman traffic? An offer of freedom from England would come rather oddly, shipped to them in an African vessel, which is refused entry into the ports of Virginia or Carolina, with a cargo of three hundred Angola negroes. It would be curious to see the Guinea captain attempt at the same instant to publish his proclamation of liberty and to advertise the sale of slaves."

After throwing off the British yoke, the abolition of the slave traffic and of slavery was still a paramount issue with these men of Virginia, and in the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson had drafted a clause relative to the moral obliquity; this clause, "reprobating the enslaving the inhabitants of Africa, was struck out in compliance to South Carolina and Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who on the contrary still wished to continue it. Our Northern brethren also, I believe, felt a little tender under these censures; for though their people had few slaves themselves,

Early Legislation Against Slavery 25

yet they had been very considerable carriers of them to others.”¹

The disposition to emancipate was strongest in Virginia. In 1778, when Jefferson introduced a bill into the Assembly to stop the further importation of slaves either by land or sea—a fine of one thousand pounds to be imposed upon any transgressor—it was passed without opposition and temporarily decreased the evil, but the time was not ripe for so philanthropic an innovation, and the bill was repealed by a later Assembly. Many of the younger men, however, were imbued with a realization of the evil, especially those who at William and Mary’s College, had come under the influence of George Wythe, and it was to these that many looked for the ultimate righting of the wrong. Adumbrations of a future catastrophe broke upon Jefferson, but in that period of patriotism, his almost prophetic vision saw not the dim, distant conflict as one arising out of the inherent differences of North and South, though this came to sadden his declining years, but rather as one of race against race: “Indeed I tremble for my

¹ *Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson.*

26 Historic Sketches of the South

country when I reflect that God is just; that His justice cannot sleep forever; that considering numbers, nature, and natural means only, a revolution of the wheel of fortune, an exchange of situation is among possible events." The hope of eradicating negro slavery before it took a too vital hold upon the needs and institutions of his land stirred his patriotic and spiritual zeal; throughout a long life he took a vigorous stand against its growth. In 1784, when Virginia gave to the United States her portion of the Northwest Territory, it was Jefferson, assisted by Chase and Howell, who drafted and ardently advocated the ordinance that "after the year 1800 there should be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in any of the said States, otherwise than in punishment of crime." This was defeated, but led to the Ordinance of 1787 which forever excluded slavery from the territory northwest of the Ohio River.

At the Constitutional Convention held in Philadelphia in 1787, Jefferson urged as a step towards the ultimate ending of slavery, the immediate abolition of the importation, but Pinckney of

Early Legislation Against Slavery 27

South Carolina moved that the traffic be extended until 1808, and he was seconded by Gorman of Massachusetts. The motion carried in all the New England States, in South Carolina, Georgia, and Maryland; Virginia, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware were against it. This exigency of extending it for twenty years was a subject of grave apprehension to many thoughtful and patriotic men who were slave owners, among them Jefferson, Washington, and Madison; though the attitude of the last was frequently ambiguous about many questions, he commits himself very fully on this clause of the Constitution in *The Federalist*: "It were doubtless to be wished that the power of prohibiting the importation of slaves had not been postponed until 1808, or, rather, that it had been suffered to have immediate operation. But it is not difficult to account either for the restriction on the general government or for the manner in which the whole clause is expressed. It ought to be considered as a great point gained in favor of humanity, that a period of twenty years may terminate forever within these States, a traffic which has so long and so

28 Historic Sketches of the South

loudly upbraided the barbarism of modern polity.”

It may be assumed that the majority of those engaged in framing the Constitution regarded slavery as a domestic problem nearing its end, and it was a policy which at that time received more vehement denunciation from men of the South than those of the North, probably because a part of the North was actively engaged in the traffic and that the humanitarians of the South, born in the midst of slavery, were not only awake to the ethical significance of the evil, but were averse to raising within their midst thousands of an alien race. That the disposition to discontinue all avenues which led to a continuation of slavery was not more general was incomprehensible to Jefferson, and absolutely out of harmony with the spirit of freedom which permeated American life: “What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment, and death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment be deaf to all those motives whose power supported him through trial, and inflict on his fellow-men a

Early Legislation Against Slavery 29

bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery, than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose. But we must await, with patience, the workings of an over-ruling Providence, and hope that that is preparing the deliverance of those, our suffering brethren. When the measure of their tears shall be full, when their groans shall have involved heaven itself in darkness, doubtless, a God of justice will awaken to their distress, and by diffusing light and liberality among their oppressors, or at length, by his exterminating thunder, manifest his attention to the things of this world, and that they are not left to the guidance of a blind fatality.”^{*}

This constitutional postponement did not even settle the question temporarily. The Quakers presented a memorial for the abolition of the slave trade to the very first Congress (1790). This was reported by a committee to the whole House; and after various amendments was returned with the following:

“Ist, That migration or importation of such persons, as any of the States now existing shall

^{*} Jefferson's observations to Meunier.

30 Historic Sketches of the South

think proper to admit, can not be prohibited by Congress prior to the year 1808.

“2d, That Congress have no authority to interfere in emancipation of slaves or in the treatment of them within any of the States; it remaining with the several States alone to provide any regulations therein, which humanity and true polity may require.”

This was a perilous and critical time—a time of trial for the new Constitution—when the States, watchful and alert, were jealous of their rights, and the Quakers' action was regarded by many as a flagrant violation of those rights. Washington considered their petition inopportune, especially as the question had been recently disposed of and was contained in an article of the Constitution, and so expressed himself in a letter: “The memorial of the Quakers [and a very malapropos one it was] has at length been put to sleep, and will scarcely awake before the year 1808.” However, the Quakers' attitude was not equivocal, as was that of the Puritan New Englander. Their petition grew from earnest convictions—convictions which were deep-rooted before they came to America,

Early Legislation Against Slavery 31

for they had expressed their repugnance to the English slave trade in 1671, and after coming to America had discouraged participation in slavery as early as 1696; in 1776 they placed their ultimatum upon it by excluding from membership any Quaker slaveholder.

This constitutional extension of the slave traffic closed all possibility of the question ever being settled amicably. Short-sightedness can scarcely be charged to those responsible, for at that time there was no thought of an acquisition of territory on the south and southwest, and the cultivation of cotton was still in its infancy. Before another decade Eli Whitney had invented the cotton-gin; this gave an impetus to the growing of cotton; agriculture in the South was revolutionized. To make way for the industry Georgia ceded her western territory to the United States and a tide of Southern immigration from the older centers of Virginia and the Carolinas rapidly flowed into Alabama and Mississippi. The wanderlust of a hardy, pioneer ancestry was in these men's veins. Accompanied often by gentle families, their household goods, and their negroes they

32 Historic Sketches of the South

started overland. By long and tedious journeyings, across mountain, stream, and swamp—through seemingly boundless stretches of majestic pines—sometimes encountering hostile Indians and again exchanging friendly courtesies with the friendly Choctaws and Chickasaws, they reached the new frontier, and established themselves along the river courses. Others came by sailing vessels, and passing through the French and Spanish cities of Pensacola, Mobile, and New Orleans, followed the river courses into the interior. The log cabins which sprang up in the wilderness, were soon supplanted by comfortable, substantial homes frequently built of brick made upon the plantations or of hand-hewn lumber; each became a nucleus of activities around which all things necessary for the maintenance of life were produced. On the well-ordered plantations the African was not only field laborer and faithful domestic, but became cobbler, mason, carpenter, and a spinner and weaver of cotton and wool. In this virgin region, far removed from the life and influences of the older States, there grew up a vital and mutual dependence between master and slave;

Early Legislation Against Slavery 33

as such, each was necessary to the other; but it was not a combination out of which sentiments for the ultimate freedom of the negro were apt to grow; and it was these who were farthest removed from the later machinations of the Abolitionists, who were most bitter and strenuous in their opposition. In this close relation which in all but rare exceptions was a kindly one, the Southerner came to know the negro as the negro then could not know himself, realized his limitations, directed him along useful lines, and knew how rapidly he would revert were the civilizing and humanizing influence of slavery as it existed in the South removed. In later years when Southerners stood before a questioning world, there was no sophistry in the protests of those who declared that slavery was beneficial, and it was an argument resting upon truth that the Southern negro's condition was happier than that of the laboring classes in other parts of the world.

European events also conspired towards an extension of slavery. After the French troops, already depleted by yellow fever, were defeated by the negro insurgents at San Domingo, Napo-

34 Historic Sketches of the South

leon realized the uncertainty of France retaining the great Louisiana Territory which had been but recently repossessed from Spain. To circumvent the English, who had long coveted this domain, Napoleon, in 1803, offered it to the United States for fifteen million dollars. American settlers along the Mississippi had already experienced difficulties with the Spanish who claimed complete control of the Mississippi River south of the Yazoo, and though Congress had been given no constitutional prerogative for acquiring new territory, Jefferson, who was then President, saw the varied importance of this acquisition, and successfully and with very little criticism directed the negotiations. This brought into the United States, not only a vast terra incognita, but an extensive Franco-Spanish civilization stretching along the Gulf of Mexico, with French outposts scattered along the great river systems and reaching into the very heart of America.

The divergence of this civilization from that of English colonization was not only racial, but its tone had been qualified by the spirit in which the settlements had been made and the polity adopted

Early Legislation Against Slavery 35

by each. It possessed nothing of New England's austerity, or of Virginia's somewhat stolid stateliness, but was characterized by a graceful picturesqueness and a delightful bonhomie. The black-robed priest if not the pathfinder who blazed the way for French settlements was usually the comrade and companion of those who did. Religion and settlement went hand in hand. None of the torturing and enslaving methods used by the Puritans to force upon the natives a cold, stern religion, unattractive even to other Christian sects, or by the Spanish in Mexico and Florida, were resorted to by the French. Wherever there was a priest, Mass began the day. The mystic ceremony, performed in the dewy freshness of early morning within the forest's depths, or on a strip of sandy beach beside the mighty waters; the solemn gestures of the celebrant and the adoring attitude of the worshippers appealed to the Indian imagination, and the French were soon importuned to invoke their Great Spirit to aid the red man, to bring rain or to heal the sick or wounded.

From Mobile, the oldest and for many years the

36 Historic Sketches of the South

chief French settlement, the genius of Iberville and Bienville Lemoyne, aided by ardent and indefatigable missionaries, reached out to remote Indian tribes, conciliating and binding them as allies. They dealt fairly with the Indian, but in cases of treachery used the Indian's own method of punishment. From the Indians they also adopted the custom of making slaves of hostile captives. Negro slavery also existed in these settlements from very early years, for in the quaint baptismal register of 1704-1778, forming a part of the archives of the Catholic Cathedral of Mobile, is recorded the baptism of two negro children belonging to Bienville in 1707, and in the same year a negro woman belonging to him bore the first negro child born on the Gulf coast.¹

Gold was not found, nor did the French settlements on the Gulf lay in the wake of the treasure-laden Spanish galleons, but the climate was benign, the lands rich, and the forests afforded an abundance of food, and in times of scarcity Bienville sometimes quartered his soldiers among the friendly natives. There was leisure for the ameni-

¹ Hamilton's *Colonial Mobile*.

Early Legislation Against Slavery 37

ties, and the priest and nun who had given up life and ambition in the Old World were not only the spiritual advisers and educators of the young of New France, but as missionaries guided and instructed the Indian and the slave. Their institutions became asylums for the sick and desolate of any race, and to their influence may be traced the easy, happy condition of the negro slave among the French of Louisiana. There was that in the temperament of these French which while appropriating the Indian's and negro's usefulness at the same time beguiled and won them. An incident of a slave's heroic loyalty to the French is related by Gayarré in his *Louisiana*. After the French settlements passed under Spanish control, New Orleans revolted, and the leaders were sentenced to be shot; Jeannot the negro hangman cut off his right arm rather than raise it against a Frenchman.

In March, 1724, Bienville issued a code, one clause of which forbade marriages between whites and blacks. Such marriages had taken place, and had given rise to what afterwards became an extensive Afro-Latin population. In many places

38 Historic Sketches of the South

along the Gulf coast it is among these so-called Creoles who have clung to their original habitations along the river banks, the creeks, and bays, that the old French names are found and a patois spoken. The result of this amalgamation did not seem mongrel, but distinctive, and in their local history, covering two hundred years, during which time they have lived under five different flags, there has been a pride of race which has kept the original strain pure. Deeply religious, they have been characterized by honesty, frugality, and industry. They were never slaves, but were in many instances slave owners.

A Société des Amis des Noirs had been formed in Paris, in 1788. Its object was to end the slave trade and slavery, especially in San Domingo from which came many reports of cruelty and oppression. A little later, France in establishing the rights and equality of man passed through her awful revolution. Though Louisiana was in constant touch and sympathy with France, among her peaceful, pleasure-loving people no sentiment about negro freedom or equality seems to have been evolved. When this great territory passed

Early Legislation Against Slavery 39

into the United States, it carried with it its institution of slavery, which, established as it was in the habits and thoughts of these people, strengthened slavery's hold upon the South, pushed further away, and complicated with added difficulties the fulfillment of the hope of those great Southerners who had looked for its gradual and peaceful termination. In the government of this new territory we again meet with the large vision of Jefferson and his desire to curtail slavery. Outside importations were forbidden, and only slaves who had been brought to this country before 1798 could be carried by their masters for the purpose of settlement into Louisiana. All others carried in would be freed and the penalty for each offense would be three hundred dollars.

To prepare the seafaring interests for the statute of 1808, and to lead American sentiment to its acceptance, Congress in the early part of the same year (1803) prohibited after April 1, 1803, the importation of any persons of color, or the entry of any vessels containing such persons into those States whose laws already debarred such importation. Indians were not included in

40 Historic Sketches of the South

this prohibition. The penalty for the first violation was a fine of one thousand dollars for every such person, one half to be appropriated to the United States and the other to be given to the informer. For the latter offense, the vessel and all appurtenances were to be confiscated by the United States, one half the net proceeds to be given to such "person or persons on whose information the seizure of such forfeiture shall be made."¹

When New Jersey abolished slavery in 1804, this statute obtained in all the Northern States. In their economy slavery was an incubus. This statute imposed no financial sacrifice on individuals, for in most cases the relatively few slaves had been transferred and sold in the South. Though there were threatening party differences, as yet there seems no general feeling against slavery in those States to which it was peculiar, and such sentiments as were entertained were more abstract than those common in the South itself.² Many

¹ United States Statutes at Large.

² "The Reverend Mr. Coffin of New England who is now here soliciting donations for a college in Green County, in Tennessee, tells me that when he first determined to engage in this enterprise,

Early Legislation Against Slavery 41

Northern fortunes had been built upon the slave trade; though prohibiting the importation into their own States, numbers were still actively engaged in the traffic—and the Southern States were the only ports legally open to them, for an act forbidding the direct or indirect importation of slaves into foreign countries had become a United States statute in 1794. The South itself seldom engaged in this traffic—it was a degradation to which her aristocratic tendencies could not stoop; a “nigger-trade” was taboo; and though slave vessels plied to and from her ports, they were usually a part of Yankee enterprise.

Jefferson, to whom the question had so long been a momentous one, welcomed the time when the traffic would end, and in his sixth annual

he wrote a paper recommendatory of the enterprise, which he meant to get signed by clergymen, and a similar one for persons in a civil character, at the head of which he wished Mr. Adams to put his name, he being then President, and the application going only for his name and not a donation. Mr. Adams, after reading the paper and considering, said, He saw no possibility of continuing the union of the States; that their dissolution must necessarily take place; that he therefore saw no propriety in recommending to New England men to promote a literary institution in the South; that it was in fact giving strength to those who were to be their enemies; and therefore he would have nothing to do with it.”—Thomas Jefferson, *The Anas*, Dec. 13, 1803.

42 Historic Sketches of the South

message to Congress, December 2, 1806, rejoiced "on the approach of the period at which you may interpose your authority constitutionally, to withdraw the citizens of the United States from all further participation in those violations of human rights which have so long continued on the unoffending inhabitants of Africa, and which the morality, the reputation, and the best interests of the country have long been eager to proscribe." With the first of January, 1808, it became unlawful for any person of color to be imported into the United States or her territory; any person aiding or abetting such traffic to be fined five thousand dollars; also "any citizen of the United States, building, fitting out, equipping, loading or otherwise preparing or sending away any ship or vessel, knowing that the same shall be employed in such trade or business" shall pay twenty thousand dollars, a part to go to the United States and another to any person or persons who shall prosecute the offender. Every vessel found engaged in the traffic was to be "seized, prosecuted, and condemned in any of the circuit courts or district courts where the said ship or vessel may be found

Early Legislation Against Slavery 43

or seized." The President was authorized to use the **naval and revenue** forces to enforce the statute. They were to cruise on the coast of the United States and her territories; to seize and bring to port vessels contravening the provisions of the act, the captain or commander to be prosecuted before any court of the United States having jurisdiction thereof; and if convicted to be fined not more than ten thousand dollars, and to be subject to imprisonment to not more than four years.¹

These and further enactments of a like nature ended constitutionally the slave traffic in the United States. Many New Englanders had nothing further to gain; there was no legitimate financial emolument now standing between them and a realization of the ethical side of the slave question. Instead of lending a conservative help to those of the South who hoped by gradual and conciliatory methods to loose slavery's growing hold upon their institutions, through a curious psychological metamorphosis they began to look askance upon the South and its institution of slavery, and to affiliate in thought with the abolition movement

¹ United States Statutes at Large.

44 Historic Sketches of the South

which under Clarkson, Wilberforce, and others was stirring England; forgetting in their zeal that the wrongs which Clarkson and Wilberforce were championing were the wrongs of which England and New England as slave traders had been the chief perpetrators. This growing sentiment was seized upon by politicians and played upon for party purposes. It was with increased apprehension that they saw the extension of the slave interests which the purchase of Louisiana had necessitated, and the further representation these interests would be given as new States were formed from the slave territory. For a decade this jealousy was kept within safe bounds by any preponderance of representation being checkmated and balanced by the formation of a Free State. Yet this feeling was becoming rapidly contagious, spreading to many who had not previously thought of slavery, or who regarded it as a domestic policy to be settled by the Slave States individually and exclusively. With the development of the Missouri controversy, the temperamental divergence born of several centuries of turmoil and turbulence in England, and too deep-rooted to be really dead,

Early Legislation Against Slavery 45

roused from the anesthesia of united effort against a common enemy and a subsequent enthusiasm for Union, and stood forth definitely defined as North and South. Forgetful of the give and take necessary for the harmonious existence of polities as of individuals, the country was still not large enough or the political interests sufficiently varied, for such differences to be conducive to well-being. In his Presidential farewell Washington warned his countrymen against a geographical division of interests: "In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs as a matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by *geographical discrimination*, . . . northern and southern . . . Atlantic and western; whence designing men may endeavor to excite a belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart-burnings which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each

46 Historic Sketches of the South

other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection." To Jefferson, aged and waiting, this Missouri controversy and its adjustment, was the alarum in which he heard the death-knell of the Union, and in a letter to John Holmes, dated Monticello, April 22, 1820, he so expresses himself: "I thank you, dear sir, for the copy you have been so kind as to send me of the letter to your constituents on the Missouri question. It is a perfect justification to them. I had for a long time ceased to read newspapers, or pay any attention to public affairs, confident they were in good hands, and content to be a passenger in our bark to the shore from which I am not far distant. But this momentous question, like a fire-bell in the night, awakened and filled me with terror. I considered it at once as the death-knell of the Union. It is hushed indeed, for the moment. But this is a reprieve only, not the final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper. I can say, with conscious

Early Legislation Against Slavery 47

truth, that there is not a man on earth who would sacrifice more than I would to relieve us from this heavy reproach, in any practical way. The cession of that kind of property (for so it is mis-named) is a bagatelle, which would not cost me a second thought, if in that way a general emancipation and *expatriation* could be effected; and gradually, and with due sacrifices, I think it might be. But, as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale and self-preservation in the other. Of one thing I am certain, that as the passage of slaves from one Free State to another would not make a slave of a single human being who would not be so without it, so their diffusion over a greater surface would make them individually happier, and proportionately facilitate the accomplishment of their emancipation, by dividing the burden on a greater number of coadjutors. An abstinence, too, from this act of power, would remove the jealousy excited by the undertaking of Congress to regulate the condition of the different descriptions of men comprising a State. This certainly is the exclusive right of every State, which nothing

48 Historic Sketches of the South

in the Constitution has taken from them, and given to the General Government. Could Congress, for example, say that the non-freemen of Connecticut could be freemen, or that they shall not emigrate to another State?

“I regret that I am now to die in the belief that the useless sacrifice of themselves of the generation of 1776, to acquire self-government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away, by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons, and that my only consolation is to be that I shall not live to weep over it. If they would dispassionately weigh the blessings they will throw away against an abstract principle, more likely to be effected by union than by scission, they would pause before they would perpetrate this act of suicide on themselves, and of treason against the hopes of the world. To yourself, as the faithful advocate of the Union, I tender the offering of my high esteem and respect.”

CHAPTER III

ILLEGAL TRAFFIC IN SLAVES

LEGISLATION against habits which by an evolution of sentiment have become moral issues is always followed by flagrant violations, for men are usually loth to acquiesce in things which they consider a curtailment of their livelihood. For a century and a half, the slave traffic had been an immense source of revenue for a large class of citizens. Despite the constitutional prohibition, the imposition of heavy fines and the offer of large rewards, the traffic in negroes continued to flourish—nor was it carried on with any great degree of surreptitiousness. Vessels intended for this purpose were built with a reference to speed and were probably the fleetest craft afloat.

In the early years of the Union the revenue and naval forces were necessarily small and the coast a vast and sparsely inhabited one. Algerian pirates called for a part of their strength, and their

50 Historic Sketches of the South

energies were again directed against the British in 1812; pirates harassed commerce off the South Atlantic States and in the Gulf of Mexico—Lafitte establishing a kingdom at Barataria, an island in the lower Mississippi, from which sailed many piratical expeditions, and where a brisk trade in slaves was carried on. Though our naval force seemed inadequate it had been singularly successful against these outside adversaries. These preoccupations seem scarcely sufficient excuse for the flourishing condition of the illegal traffic in slaves. Money, politics, and indifference appear to have been a trinity that glossed over rottenness then as now. Obscure harbors and lonely shores were not always the destination of these hell-craft, but they sailed to and from the principal seaport towns. With scarcely an exception they were fitted up by New Englanders and New Yorkers and manned by down-east seamen; Rhode Island led with Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York as close seconds. The West Indies and Brazil offered a market, and some found their way into Southern ports, where, through the cooperation of an equally criminal class of Southern-

ers, the unfortunate, contraband humans were sold.

While the middle passage before 1808 was a veritable inferno, it was afterwards characterized by a barbarity which should have sickened the soul of all humanity, yet the voice and sentiment of humane, law-abiding Americans were not strong enough to make this traffic impossible. Cyrus King in a speech on the Missouri Question, in 1819, described the shameless situation: "It well might be supposed that the slave trade would in practice be extinguished; that virtuous men would by their abhorrence stay its polluted march and the wicked would be overawed by its potent punishment, but unfortunately the case is far otherwise. We have but melancholy proofs from unquestionable sources that it is still carried on with all the implacable ferocity—and insatiable rapacity—of former times. Avarice has grown more subtile in its evasions; and watches and seizes its prey with an appetite quickened rather than suppressed by its guilty vigils. American citizens are steeped up to their very mouths (I scarcely use too bold a figure) in this stream of

52 Historic Sketches of the South

iniquity? They throng the coasts of Africa under the stained flags of Spain and Portugal, sometimes selling abroad their 'cargoes of despair,' and sometimes bringing them into some of our Southern ports, and there, under the forms of law, defeating the purpose of the law itself, and legalizing their inhuman but profitable adventures."

Those so unfortunate as to have been brought into any of the Southern States were by the Constitution "subject to any regulations, not contravening the provisions of the act, which the legislatures of the several states or territories at any time hereafter may make, for disposing of any such negro, mulatto, or person of color." As some extenuation for those Southern States, let it be asked, What was to be done with these unfortunate Africans? Barbarians all—often of the lowest type—and sometimes cannibals—could they be given freedom? The attention of thinking men was early directed to the status of the free black; how to place him to his own best advantage that his position as a citizen would not be equivocal; and to avoid arousing by his idle example or de-

signing machinations, discord, dissatisfaction, and even mutiny among the slaves. In 1803, a colonization plan was discussed in the Virginia Assembly; this led to a correspondence on the subject between Madison, who was then Governor, and President Jefferson. Out of this was born in 1816, what soon became a very active organization, the American Colonization Society. After negotiations, lands were secured on the west coast of Africa at Cape Mesurada. There the society established a colony to which such free blacks as desired might be conveyed, and which was also to receive the Africans taken from slavers, or those found to have been smuggled into the country by traders. During all the years of the society's activities the unfortunates reached by their clemency were small in proportion to those surreptitiously sold into bondage; this was due to the powerful abettors—often legalized ones—of the traffic. A lack of intelligent forethought was responsible for disheartening results in their early efforts at colonization. But the society's efforts at home were more successful by fostering a spirit against the trade, and it was instrumental in

54 Historic Sketches of the South

regulating the laws in some of the Southern States which were so ambiguous as to aid rather than crush the trade.¹ In 1819, Congress stipulated that contraband Africans were to be taken from State jurisdiction to become wards of the Government, and the President was authorized to make "such regulations and arrangements as he may deem expedient for the safe-keeping, support, and removal beyond the limits of the United States, of all such negroes, mulattoes, or persons of color, as may be so delivered and brought within their jurisdiction. And to appoint a proper person or persons, residing upon the coast of Africa, as agent or agents for receiving negroes, etc., delivered from on board vessels, seized in the prosecution of trade by commanders of the United States armed vessels." In 1819, Congress acting upon a memorial presented by the Colonization Society, declared the slave traffic to be piracy punishable with death. In this same year the statute of 1809 was enlarged and made more stringent and the President was empowered to send armed vessels along the African coast. One hundred

¹ *North American Review*, February, 1824.

thousand dollars was appropriated for this purpose.

Rigid legislation only multiplied the horrors, without curtailing the evil. With death as the penalty, when there was danger of apprehension, it was not uncommon for the whole cargo to be thrown into the sea. This, compared with the tortures of frequent passages, was almost humane. To escape the terrors, numbers would embrace death if given the opportunity. Yet the trade was highly profitable even if three out of four cargoes were lost.

By the Treaty of Ghent (1815), the United States and Great Britain agreed separately and individually to use their influence to suppress the trade. Yet later the United States threw sheltering arms around those of her citizens whom Britain had reason to suspect—maritime rights, the statement that Southern slave owners might make voyages accompanied by their slaves, or the plea of slave hands on merchant ships—often protected malefactors. After Parliament abolished slavery from the British colonies, the American brig *Comet* was stranded off the Bahamas (1830), as

56 Historic Sketches of the South

was the *Encomium* in 1834 and the *Enterprise* in 1835; slaves were found aboard in each case and liberated by the English. Americans raised a loud cry. After a correspondence covering nearly ten years Great Britain agreed to pay for the Africans, and admonished her colonies on the southern borders of the United States to "maintain good neighborhood." As the years went by and all so-called efforts proved ineffectual, England, with a sincere desire to end the traffic, developed an assumption that it was her especial privilege, and inaugurated a right of search, or visit, against the very nature of which it was imperative that the United States should protest. In many cases this necessity became unavoidably another protection for malefactors. As the flags of various countries were constantly used to cover the traffic, England in 1803 united with Russia, France, Austria, and Prussia for the suppression, and acquired supervision along the African coast, maintaining a right of search. America was not approached on this subject, though Lord Palmerston boldly declared to the world England's right to "visit" American merchantmen (Aug. 13,

1841). This was later sustained by Lord Aberdeen (Oct. 13, 1841). America's attitude toward the situation was awaited with great interest by European Powers. Such an assumption could not be tolerated—America had already suffered too much from British assumption—and President Tyler in his message to Congress protested that “however desirous the United States may be for the suppression of the slave trade, they cannot consent to any interpolations of the maritime code at the mere will and pleasure of other governments. We deny the right of any such interpolation to any one, or all the nations of earth without our consent. . . . American citizens prosecuting a lawful commerce on the African seas, under the flag of their country, are not responsible for the abuse or unlawful use of that flag by others; nor can they rightfully, on account of any such alleged abuses, be interrupted, molested, or detained while in the ocean; and if thus molested and detained while pursuing honest voyages in the usual way and violating no laws themselves, they are unquestionably entitled to indemnity.”¹

¹ Right of Search, Daniel Webster.

58 Historic Sketches of the South

Lord Aberdeen in his correspondence with Mr. Stephenson (Oct. 13, 1841) had admitted that it would be an infringement of public law, to visit and search American vessels during times of peace, if that right were not granted by treaty. "But no such right is asserted. We sincerely desire to respect the vessels of the United States, but we may reasonably expect to know what it is we respect. Doubtless the flag is *prima facie* evidence of nationality of the vessel; and, if this evidence were in its nature conclusive and irrefragible, it ought to preclude all further inquiry. But it is sufficiently notorious that the flags of all nations are liable to be assumed by those who have no right or title to bear them. Mr. Stephenson himself fully admits the extent to which the American flag has been employed for the purpose of covering this infamous traffic. The undersigned joins with Mr. Stephenson in deeply lamenting the evil; and he agrees with him in thinking the United States ought not to be considered responsible for the abuse of their flag. But if all inquiry be resisted, even when carried no further than to ascertain the nationality of the vessel, and impu-

nity be claimed for the most lawless and desperate of mankind, in the commission of the fraud the undersigned greatly fears that it may be regarded as something like an assumption of that responsibility which has been deprecated by Mr. Stephenson. . . .

“The undersigned, although with pain, must add, that if such visit lead to the proof of the American origin of the vessel, and that she was avowedly engaged in the trade, exhibiting manacles, fetters, and other usual implements of torture, or had even a number of those unfortunates on board, no British officer could interfere further. He might give information to the cruisers of the United States, but it could not be in his power to arrest or impede the prosecution of the voyage and the success of the undertaking.”

The question called for a diplomatic correspondence. In 1842, Lord Ashburton was sent as special minister to the United States, empowered to settle the Northwest Boundary, and other questions of controversy. The result of his conference with Daniel Webster, Secretary of State, was a treaty between Great Britain and the United

60 Historic Sketches of the South

States known as the Ashburton Treaty and as the Treaty of Washington. By the eighth article each stipulated to "maintain on the African coast an adequate squadron, to carry in all not less than eighty guns, to enforce separately and respectively the laws, rights, and obligations of the two countries for the suppression of the slave trade."

There was also the realization that as long as certain countries offered open markets for slaves, the temptation to malefactors would be so great that their efforts would be more or less ineffectual; by the ninth article both countries agreed to "unite in all becoming representations and remonstrances with any and all powers within whose dominions such markets are allowed to exist," and that "they will urge upon all such powers the propriety and duty of closing such markets effectually, at once and forever."

Americans, among others, continued to brazenly carry on the trade; as the gap between the North and the South widened, it was carried on with renewed vigor. The Abolitionists' thoughts were focused on conditions in the South, and failed to note the flourishing trade carried on under their

very eyes from the ports of New England and New York. Inhabitants of these places were constantly being found implicated, but by lack of proof, or through some technicality, they were seldom convicted. Officials, who were either conniving or indifferent, aided them in their lucrative trade. As late as 1858, a brisk trade was carried on; statistics show that in that year eighty-five slavers were fitted out and sailed from New York alone, and these successfully captured and sold into slavery fifteen thousand Africans. Sometimes they were sent into the South. The schooner *Wanderer* in the fall of 1858 surreptitiously landed three hundred at Brunswick, Georgia; they were taken up the Savannah River and sold. In October, of the same year, an alleged slave bark, *Isle de Cuba*, was taken in custody at Boston, and her crew held as witnesses under a thousand-dollar bond; later they and Captain Dobson were discharged. In November, the schooner *Madison* was taken by the United States marshal at New York. She was intended for the slave trade, was sold at auction, and bought in for Eddy & Gardener of Salem, Mass., for sixteen hundred dollars.

62 Historic Sketches of the South

Evidence pointed that she was bound for Salem to be fitted out as a slaver when captured. In September the *Echo* was captured by a revenue cutter and taken to Charleston as the nearest port; Charleston was very active in her efforts to restrain the trade. The *Echo* was commanded by Captain Townsend of Rhode Island—the queen of the slave-trading States. The Africans were cared for at Charleston until the Colonization Society could take charge of them. They were the wildest barbarians—men and women were alike nude, though this was no evidence that they had been accustomed to going so in their native land, as their clothes were usually taken from them by their captors. Some of the charitable ladies provided clothing for them. Among all these unfortunates there was but one article of clothing—a glove—and this was worn with great pride and distinction by a tall, handsome negress. Hoop-skirts were then in vogue, and this woman was dressed by the ladies in full regalia. Entranced, she danced and shrieked with delight, pushing the hoop-skirt on one side to see it stick out on the other.

Many violations might be cited. Sometimes ships reported deserted vessels on the high seas—vessels whose manacles and wooden spoons told a gruesome tragedy. An article in the *New York World*, in 1859, described some of the methods by which the slavers escaped punishment: "The slave trader takes care to cross the ocean without a national flag or purpose of any kind. The reason for this is that if captured, no court can condemn them for piracy. The vessels may be condemned and the negroes liberated by the captor, but the crew can be punished only by the nation under whose flag the offense was committed. No flag, the crew escapes." Slavers no longer left America with manacles, gewgaws, and fire-water, but carried money. Once on the African coast they could buy from English or other vessels the articles needed for trade. The bargain struck, the crew that made the outward voyage was usually discharged, and a new one of adventurous spirit procured on the African coast.

Thirteen years after the ratification of the Ashburton Treaty, when England made reclamations on the Brazilian Government for innumerable

64 Historic Sketches of the South

violations of her treaties, the reply of the Emperor was "if Great Britain would find the real culprits, she must go to the ports of Boston and New York to find them."¹

¹ *Journal de Commercio*, Rio, May 26, 1856.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATIONS FOR CLOTILDE'S VOYAGE

IN 1858, Mobile had been for almost a century and a half one of the important Gulf coast ports. Picturesquely situated at the head of a lagoon-like bay, the craft of many nations dropped anchor in her waters. Somewhat past the heyday of youth, her buildings mellowed by time and her streets shaded by trees, she wore an air that was calm and comfortable, and her homes and public buildings bespoke a settled prosperity. Survivors of primitive and pioneer life might be seen about the streets; some Indians lingered on and with baskets strapped across their shoulders sold *filé* and sassafras about the streets, while white-covered "Chickasaha" wagons, drawn by from six to twenty oxen, came slowly and laboriously down Spring Hill and St. Stephen's roads, bringing staples from the interior to the Mobile markets. The district near the river and towards the northern

66 Historic Sketches of the South

part of the town was given over to commerce and occupied by cotton warehouses—low-lying, monotonous structures of brick. The river boats carried on a brisk trade and Mobile's export to foreign countries was large. Life about the wharves which was usually busy—and often gay—became very stirring during the latter part of 1858 and 1859. It drew upon itself the attention of the United States Government, elicited a special proclamation from the President, and a vigilant watch by United States officials.

In the early fifties, during one of Nicaragua's chronic revolutions, General Walker had been invited by the democrats of Leon to unite with them against the aristocrats of Granada. Many Alabamians joined him in this expedition and shed their blood for the cause. Walker gained supreme power, but his glory was short-lived. The opposing forces united and compelled him to leave. In 1857, President Buchanan recognized him as President of Nicaragua, and addressed him as such. His adventurous exploit met with general acclamation. But when Walker announced that Nicaragua would be open to Southern colonization,

Preparations for Clotilde's Voyage 67

admitting slaves, it was like flaunting a red rag before a maddened populace; the abolitionism of the North, already unrestrained in its fanaticism and jealous hatred, backed by Northern commercialism caused a rapid reversion of feeling. Walker, the erstwhile hero, was denounced as a filibuster, and Southerners were accused of attempting to establish a Southern Republic along the Gulf of Mexico that they might spread slavery and reopen the slave traffic.

In 1858, Walker prepared to make good his previous claims. The collectors of the ports of New Orleans and Mobile were ordered not to clear vessels for Nicaraguan ports, before first communicating with the Government of Washington. Vessels carrying passengers and receiving every protection of the Government still sailed from Eastern ports to San Juan del Norte. Mobile and New Orleans felt the trade of the South to be seriously crippled by this discrimination. In a special message, the President denounced the "leaders of former illegal expeditions who had expressed their intention of open hostilities against Nicaragua," and particularly against one "who is

68 Historic Sketches of the South

now at Mobile, which has been designated as the rendezvous and place of departure for San Juan del Norte." He enjoined all the Government officers, "civil and military, to be active, vigilant, and faithful in suppressing these illegal enterprises." This message was received with indignation throughout the whole of the lower South. Mobilians gathered in groups about the streets and on the new post-office steps, and excitedly discussed the President's proclamation. They were in sympathy with Walker and many were contributing funds towards the expedition. Espousal of his cause became an issue in the mayoral election. Further excitement was generated by the attitude of Judge Campbell, his charge to the grand jury, and his emphasis of the President's order for officials to be "vigilant, active, and faithful." Citizens regarded this as espionage and as a personal affront to their fellow townsman, Robert H. Smith, collector of the port. The discovery of a Government spy—one General Wilson from Ohio—and a minion of Judge Campbell—who was seen "sneaking about the wharves and warehouses of the city, to find something contra-

Preparations for Clotilde's Voyage 69

band of Abolition interest and Abolition policy," provoked the citizens to further anger. "As a next step we shall have our servants paid to report the words which drop from us at the table"¹

Rebellion was already rampant in the South. The temperament of Southern men was unfailingly daring—adventure appealed to their imaginations and risk was a game to be played. In the midst of this excitement, an expedition was preparing, money was being contributed, and the schooner *Susan* fitted out. Harry Maury, socially and financially prominent, was in command. When ready to sail she was refused clearing papers, but Maury weighed anchor and sailed down the bay, preparatory to joining the fleet. The revenue cutter *McClelland* pursued, brought her to, and boarded her and demanded her papers. Maury said he did not expect to receive them until he reached the fleet. The captain of the *McClelland* then claimed the *Susan* as a prize for the Government; Maury refused to consider her as such. Lieutenant White was placed aboard with orders to take her to Dog River Bar and to hold her there

¹ *Mobile Register*, December, 1858.

70 Historic Sketches of the South

as prize. Maury nonchalantly replied that he did not object to White remaining aboard as his guest. The next day both vessels sailed about the bay, but the captain, under orders from the custom-house at Mobile, warned Maury that if he attempted to sail away the *Susan* would be sunk. At dark the captain ordered both boats to drop anchor for the night. About eleven o'clock, a heavy mist arose, the *Susan* weighed anchor and slipped noiselessly away, carrying aboard Lieutenant White. The *Mobile Register*, voicing the sentiments of the citizens, wished for the voyage "that the breezes be prosperous and the fates propitious." When two hundred miles out in the Gulf, Lieutenant White was transferred to the bark *Oregon* and sent back to New Orleans, where he stated that he had received every courtesy while aboard the *Susan*. He reported that she carried besides her crew, two hundred and forty men, Minie balls, and Mississippi rifles. The *Susan* was wrecked on a coral reef off Honduras. The subsequent adventures of her men is a thrilling narrative. They were received by the governor of Bay Island, who upon hearing of their predica-

Preparations for Clotilde's Voyage 71

ment sent them back to Mobile in Her Majesty's steam-sloop *Basilisk*.

With the birth and fruition of such adventures, Mobile's river-front naturally became an exciting place. About this time a group of men were one day standing on the wharf discussing the efforts the Government was finally making to suppress the slave trade, the vigilance which was being exerted, and the impossibility for a vessel equipped for such a purpose to evade officials. There was some betting—a favorite pastime of the day—and Captain Tim Meaher, a steamboat builder and river-man, who was standing near, wagered that he could send a slaver to the coast of Africa and bring through the port of Mobile a cargo of slaves. The wager was taken up and the stakes were large. This is the tradition which is given in connection with the *Clotilde's* voyage. It may have been true or it may have been invented to give color and palliation to what proved to be the last cargo of slaves brought into the United States, but it is certain that this was only one of the voyages made under the auspices of the Meahers and Captain Foster. Of these there are still

rumors among the older people, and the widow of Captain Foster, innocent and trustful, hoped until her recent death to get from the United States about thirty thousand dollars which would have been Foster's share in the *Gipsy*—a slaver which with her cargo was captured by Government officials and which was valued by those interested in her at four hundred thousand dollars.

There were three of the Meaher brothers—Tim, Jim, and Burns. They were natives of Maine, and possessed the New England love of the water and taste for the slave trade. Captain Foster was born in Nova Scotia of English parentage. His people were all seafaring—sailors, captains, and builders of boats—and possibly his proclivities were also inherited. These men were interested in a mill and a ship-yard at the mouth of Chickasabogue, three miles above Mobile. The *Clotilde*, the *Susan*, the *Gipsy*, and other boats which were engaged in the river trade, in filibustering expeditions, the slave trade, and as blockade-runners during the Civil War were built there. The *Clotilde*, because of her fleetness, was selected to make the voyage to the slave coast. She was

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R J L



Drawn by Emma Roche.

Poleete.

Preparations for Clotilde's Voyage 73

the personal property of Foster and had been designed and built by him.

Once arriving on the African coast there was little trouble in procuring a cargo of slaves, for it had long been a part of the traders' policy to instigate the tribes against each other and in this manner keep the markets stocked. News of the trade was often published in the papers. The Meahers and Foster could have sought nothing more enlightening or to their purpose than an item published in the *Mobile Register*, November 9, 1858: "From the west coast of Africa we have advice dated September 21st. The quarreling of the tribes on Sierra Leone River rendered the aspect of things very unsatisfactory. The King of Dahomey was driving a brisk trade in slaves at from fifty to sixty dollars apiece at Whydah. Immense numbers of negroes were collected along the coast for export." Foster, with a crew of northern men, sailed directly for Whydah.

CHAPTER V

THE CAPTURE OF THE TARKARS

THE slaves who constituted the *Clotilde's* cargo and who have become historic by being the last brought into the United States were captured by Dahomey's warriors and Amazons on one of their cruel excursions. For many years the tribe of Dahomey had been a scourge to the weaker and more peaceable tribes whose domains lay near the Gold Coast or in the interior away from the coast of Guinea. Cruel, stealthy war was their occupation—a war of surprise which aroused sleeping villages to the horrors of fire, plunder, and capture. The older victims were usually killed. Sometimes they were permitted to live and to see their young and strong overpowered, bound, and led into captivity,—a captivity from which there could be no hope of return, for the prisoners were conveyed to the coast, sold to the slavers, and carried across the sea to strange, alien lands. The King of

The Capture of the Tarkars 75

Dahomey's house was built of skulls and his drinking cups were the skulls of fallen chiefs. In the early part of the nineteenth century one of the Dahomey kings organized a battalion of women warriors—a race rare in history but not especially unique in African annals. Early cosmographies record of the King of Inhamban: "It is affirmed that he hath a strong battalion of Amazons, a warlike race of women who inhabit about the Lake of Zambre, and the outskirts of Zanzibar; compared by some for their fidelity and prowess to the Turkish Janizaries"¹ Like the Greek Amazons those of Inhamban and Dahomey were recruited by incursions upon neighboring tribes.

The Tarkar village was situated many miles inland. Poleete, one of the old survivors, says it was "many days from the water," meaning thereby the sea. They were a peace-loving, agricultural people, raising hogs, sheep, and cows, and planting corn, beans, and yams. Their chief industry was the production of palm oil. Nature had been lavish—the lands were wonderfully fertile, requiring little work and no fertilizer; the

¹ Heylyn's *Cosmographie*, 1657.

76 Historic Sketches of the South

fragrance of ripening fruits filled the forests. The Tarkar dwellings were of superior quality and had the advantage of withstanding fire. They were built of mud; the process of construction has been described by two of the survivors—Poleete and Kazoola. First a circular trench was dug and a wall of mud four feet high and a foot and a half thick laid; this was left until thoroughly dry. Another four feet was laid upon this, which was also left to dry. Then a third layer of four feet was laid making their dwellings about twelve feet high. When thoroughly dry, branches were cut, the roof thatched and covered with mud.

The Tarkars were not without laws, and had a sort of court of justice over which the King presided. Each of the old survivors lays especial stress upon honesty as a tribal characteristic. Stealing was almost unknown; all worked and had what was needed; houses were never locked and possessions seldom disturbed. All an individual's wealth "might be hung upon a tree or accidentally left—others of the tribe knew they had not put it there—that it was not theirs—so disturbed it not." "Suppose I had left my purse in town in the public

The Capture of the Tarkars 77

square. To-day I have not the time to go for it—nor to-morrow—am I worried? No, for I know when I go I will find it where I left it. Could you do that in America?” (Kazoola). As there was no reason or excuse for stealing, when one among them committed a theft, it was more through a spirit of braggadocio. The culprit would be taken before the King who would say, “You are strong—you have two arms to work—you suffer for nothing—why have you stolen?” The defendant would be imprisoned, and the Tarkars say that if he lived to get out he would steal no more.

Death was always meted to the murderer—rank having no weight with justice. Poleete explained that if the King’s son committed murder, death would fall to him as to the commoner. “Money don’t plea you there” (Poleete). The manner of execution was decapitation—the implement a sword. To illustrate the inexorable nature of their laws, the following was narrated by Kazoola: “The Law in Tarkar. If it would be my son. He kills a man. I have money—I want to buy my son. I go before the King, and say ‘Oh, King, my son has killed, but I have money.’ The King

78 Historic Sketches of the South

would reply, 'Here is the Law, read.' I read and say, 'Yes, King, the Law says Death.' And the King would answer, 'That is the Law, and I am the King. Shut your eyes, give up your son—money cannot buy.' "

The Tarkars were polygamists, sometimes having as many as three wives, but never any more. The conditions of life were so easy they could afford the luxury. There was no need to support the wives, for the women had the same amount of property as the men and did the same work. Jealousy among the wives was unknown; the first wife selected the second and the second the third, etc. This custom has been lucidly explained by Kazoola and Olouala. "Kazoola has been married about three years. His wife says, 'Kazoola, I am growing old—I am tired—I will bring you another wife.' Before speaking thus, she has already one in mind—some maid who attracts her and who Kazoola has possibly never seen. The wife goes out and finds the maid—possibly in the market-place—and asks, 'You know Kazoola?' The maid answers, 'I have heard of him.' The wife then says, 'Kazoola is good—he is kind—I would

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1 L



Abaché and Kazoola.

like you to be his wife.' The maid answers, 'Come with me to my parents.' They go together; questions are exchanged and if these are satisfactory, the parents say, 'We give our girl into your keeping—she is ours no more—be good to her.'" The wife and the maid return together to Kazoola's house. The wife introduces the maid to Kazoola, shows her how to look after things as she has done, then sits down to take her days of rest and works no more. The relation of the husband to the wives was that of protector. Once married, a man dared not look upon women other than his wives, for the punishment was very great. To justify their native custom of polygamy, the Christianized Tarkars now cite the example of David and Solomon.

They believed in the spirits of departed relatives; to these the "day was as night and the night as the day." To these spirits their actions were known. The Tarkars also possessed dualistic ideas of a future life. There was a Spirit of Good—Ahla-ahra, to whom by doing right their actual, daily life would be something of a consecration; and there was a Spirit of Evil—Ahla-bady-oleelay.

80 Historic Sketches of the South

“Do right and you will go to Ahla-ahra; do wrong, you go to Ahla-bady-oleelay.” While not exactly Nature-worshipers, they were Nature-fearers; they did not propitiate by prayer or any kind of ceremonial these Spirits of Good and Evil, but believed their powers were manifested in the wind, the cloud that covered the sun, and in the thunder and the lightning. Before these last the Tarkars trembled, and were filled with fear; they would cross their arms over their breasts and cowering, cry out, “We will be good!”

“In Africa different places, like Mobile, Montgomery, New Orleans—each have a different tribe speaking a different language. Suppose the tribe at New Orleans comes to the one at Mobile and says, ‘You have fruit and corn and cattle—you must give me half.’ You at Mobile say, ‘No, go back and raise your own cattle and corn.’ And they say, ‘If you do not give us cattle and corn, we will make war on you.’ They go back to their own country and talk among themselves. ‘You know that tribe at Mobile. We demanded half their crops and cattle—they refused; we will

The Capture of the Tarkars 81

make war upon them. But they have strong soldiers. We will go through the country, surround the village at the break of day.' "x Thus did the Dahomeyans plan their attack upon the Tarkars. One morning just at the break of day, the fiends of Dahomey—and the female warriors were the most cruel—broke upon the unsuspecting Tarkars. Some of the men were already astir and had gone into the fields to work while the day was yet cool. These were all killed; had one escaped he would have aroused the sleeping village, and the women and small children might have made their escape. They were aroused from slumber and in a few minutes death or captivity was upon them; even the infants were torn from their mothers' breasts and carried away. Those who were not killed were overpowered. Dahomey's Amazons vanquished the most stalwart men and bound them as captives. The Tarkars relate that in their paint and war clothes Dahomey's women soldiers could not be distinguished from the men. The Dahomeyans cut off the heads of their dead victims, leaving the bodies where they had fallen. The

^x *Narrative of Kazoola.*

82 Historic Sketches of the South

heads were to be taken home as evidence of individual valor and as trophies to be hung on the Dahomey huts. Human faces could express no more anguish than those of the old Tarkars when they speak of this awful experience. One of the trials and tragedies of their march to the coast was the dangling heads of their relatives and friends. When these grew offensive the Dahomeyans stopped the march that they might smoke the heads. As they passed near one of Dahomey's villages, at a curve in the big road, they caught sight of fresh heads raised on poles above the huts and of skulls, grinning white. With the captives there were some people of other tribes—friends who had been visiting in the Tarkar village—Tarkbar, Goombardi, Filanee, and Ejasha. (These tribal names are spelled as pronounced by the surviving Tarkars.) Kazoola has drawn a map of the route taken by Dahomey and of the march to the sea, which he claims any of his tribe would recognize. The towns they passed through on their march to the sea were Eko, Budigree (Badragy?), Adaché, and Whydah. This last the Tarkars sometimes call Gréfé. There they remember a white house

The Capture of the Tarkars 83

on the river-bank; behind this was a stockade wherein they were held prisoners about three weeks, at the end of which time Captain Foster came.

CHAPTER VI

THE VOYAGE

CAPTAIN FOSTER boarded at the Vanderslice home (afterwards marrying one of the daughters) in the Meaher settlement. This was about three miles from Mobile and a mile from the ship-yard at the mouth of Chickasabogue. When starting for Africa, he left home by night, slung his bag of gold across his shoulder, and went alone through the woods to the river where the *Clotilde* lay. He pulled out a part of the cabin bulk-head and concealed his gold behind it. He then picked up his crew, got under way, and passed out of the Gulf of Mexico without incident or mishap. When on the Atlantic he was alarmed to find by the stars that the *Clotilde* was drifting out of her course. He knew no cause, and she continued to drift. One night he lay on his bunk, sleepless and wondering. Like an inspiration the thought came that the hidden gold was too near the compass. He

arose, moved the gold, and the needle swung into position. A terrific hurricane blew him to the Cape Verde Islands, where he had to stop for repairs. The crew mutinied. They threatened that if he did not promise more pay, they would inform the officials of the purpose of his voyage. Foster did not hesitate to comply, for promises cost nothing and he sometimes found it unnecessary to keep them. His wife in relating this incident remarked that the captain had always said that "promises were like pie-crust—made to be broken." He made friends with the Portuguese officials and the United States Consul, and as a part of his policy presented handsome shawls and ornaments to their wives. These had been bought in Mobile and stowed away to be used in such emergencies. No questions were asked Foster. The repairs finished, he sailed away. He arrived safely in the Gulf of Guinea and had to anchor more than a mile out and be taken ashore in a small boat which was built to cut through the surf. When about to pass through a breaker, a warning would be given to Foster to hold his nose. On reaching shore he was placed in a hammock

86 Historic Sketches of the South

and conveyed by six stalwart blacks to the presence of a prince of Dahomey—a great, stout black, weighing over three hundred pounds. This prince was hospitable in his attentions and entertained Foster with the sights of Whydah. One which he did not relish was a large square enclosure in which were thousands of snakes. Walking among these creatures was both trying and disgusting. They were kept for religious ceremonials.

This prince wished to make a present to Foster, so asked him to select for himself a native—one that the “superior wisdom and exalted taste” of Foster designated the finest specimen. Gumpa was his choice, Foster making this selection with the intention of flattering the prince to whom Gumpa was nearly related. This accounts for the presence of one of Dahomey’s tribe in the African settlement near Mobile. He became known as African Peter and was a conspicuous figure in the life of the settlement. He used to tell his story in the simple phrase, “My people sold me and your people bought me.”

After many hospitalities, Foster was taken to

the stockade where the Tarkars were imprisoned. They were placed in circles composed of ten men or ten women, Foster standing in the middle. This was another trial for the unfortunates, and Kazoola says, in language which any one could understand, "He looka, an' looka, an' looka. Then he point to one." The one indicated would be taken out of the circle and placed to one side; then Foster would point to another, who would be placed with the one already selected. Foster picked out one hundred and thirty, after which he got into the hammock and was conveyed across the river to the beach. Behind him marched the Tarkars, chained one behind the other. They had to wade, the water coming up to their necks. On the beach they had their first view of the sea, and the realization that they had to go out into it was another horror. They wore clothes made of cotton—the same they had worn when captured—but as they stepped into the small boats which were to take them to the *Clotilde*, the Dahomeyans, always vicious and avaricious, tore their garments from them, saying "You go where you can get plenty of clothes." Men and women alike were

88 Historic Sketches of the South

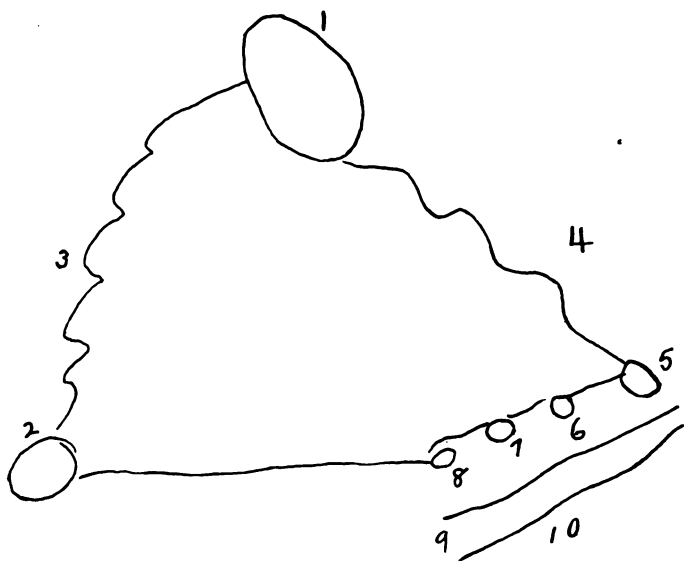
left entirely nude, and this fact is still a humiliation to the Tarkars. They regard the accusations of some American negroes that they were a naked people as a great indignity.

As the Tarkars were taken aboard the *Clotilde*, they were put into the hole. In this respect the *Clotilde* was better equipped than most slavers; the usual space in which the "middle passage" was made was from two and a half to three feet in height, and the miserable captives were stowed away much as sardines are packed in cans, without even room to sit up. The hole of the *Clotilde* was deep enough to permit of the men of lesser stature to stand erect. The top of the hole was shut down and the Tarkars were left in darkness to grieve and wonder.

When a hundred and sixteen had been brought aboard, Foster went up into the rigging with his glasses to look about the harbor. He saw that all of Dahomey's vessels were flying black flags. He hurried down and gave orders to leave all slaves who were not yet aboard; to weigh anchor and to get immediately under way. The treacherous Dahomeyans dealt also in piracy, and were

**THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS**
R 1 L



Map Drawn by Kazoola.

- (1) Tarkar Village. (2) Dahomey's Land. (3) Wavering line showing stealthy march of Dahomeyans through forest.
- (4) Route by which captive Tarkars were taken to the sea. (5), (6), (7), (8), Eko, Budigree, Adaché, Whydah, towns through which Tarkars passed. (9) River. (10) Beach and sea.

making ready to bear down upon the *Clotilde*, recapture the slaves, and take Foster and the crew prisoners. The *Clotilde* made her escape. When out some miles, the *Clotilde* was sighted by an English cruiser. The slaver was a small craft, and Foster by using a favorite tactic—an elusive tacking—evaded the English. Once in the wake of the trade-winds the *Clotilde* sailed towards her destination at a lively speed.

At the end of the thirteenth day the Africans were removed from their close, dark quarters. Their limbs were so cramped and numbed they refused to obey their wills, so they were supported by some of the crew and walked around the deck until the use of their limbs returned. Tottering on deck, to their astonished, terror-stricken eyes the sea stretched all around them: "We looka, an' looka, an' looka—nothin' but sky and water. Whar we com' from, we do not know—whar we go, we do not know" (Kazoola). One day they saw islands. The Tarkars say that on the twentieth day, Foster seemed uneasy; that he always had his glasses to his eyes; that he climbed the mast, and looked for a long time; then he came

90 Historic Sketches of the South

hurriedly down, ordered the sails down, threw out the anchors, and ordered the Tarkars back into the hole. Thus the *Clotilde* lay until night.

The Tarkars were naturally close observers; during the voyage they seem to have been particularly alert. They noted the varying colors of the sea—how at first it was blue, then green and how they passed through water that seemed blood-red. Foster was kind to them. They could eat the food—hunger makes anything palatable. Though their mental anguish was great, they suffered physically only for water. About a gill was given them at morning and at evening, and this tasted of vinegar. During such voyages, it was necessary that the water be conserved. Their only relief came when they caught rain in their parched hands and mouths.

When the *Clotilde* sailed into American waters, the Africans were put into the hole—there to remain until relief came in capture or a successful landing. Three days before they landed, when the *Clotilde* lay waiting behind the islands in Mississippi Sound and near the lower end of Mobile Bay, a bunch of green boughs was brought

to them to show that the voyage was almost at an end.

To make the hiding more secure, the *Clotilde* was dismasted. Then Foster got into a small boat, rowed by four sailors to go to the western shore of Mobile Bay, intending to send word to Meaher that the *Clotilde* had arrived. His approach was regarded with suspicion by some men ashore, and he was fired upon. Waving a white handkerchief their doubts were allayed and he offered fifty dollars for a conveyance which would take him to Mobile.

CHAPTER VII

THE RETURN

THE time of waiting had been an anxious one. The Meahers realized the risk. There had always been some, but during the absence of the *Clotilde* great agitation had become rife throughout the country, and one of the things the Government had at last undertaken to do was to wipe out at once and forever the illegal traffic in slaves. The destination and purpose of the *Clotilde* had been noised about, and Meaher realized that officials were watching his movements. Aside from the *Clotilde's* capture, he had little to fear, for every vestige of the conservatism which had so long held in restraint the abolitionism of the North and the temper of the South had disappeared; the two sections had drifted so far apart as to be virtually two countries; war clouds were looming large upon the horizon and differences had gone so far there could be no reconciliation. Garrison's

voice was ringing through the North characterizing Southerners as "thieves and robbers, men-stealers, and women-whippers" and calling loudly, "how can two walk together, except they agree? The slaveholder with his hands dripping in blood—will I make a compact with him? The man who plunders cradles—will I say to him 'Brother, let us walk together in unity?' The man who to gratify his lust or his anger, scourges women with the lash till the soil is red with blood—will I say to him, 'Give me your hand; let us form a glorious union?'" Charges which were as a scourge to Southerners; goaded and angered, many began to talk of reopening the slave traffic. The question was agitated in Congress—a number of papers advocating it, not all of which were of the South. The *New York Day Book*, May 17, 1859, came out strongly for it. "Of course no one can suppose we doubt the right of bringing negroes from Africa if they are needed. It is simply a question of expediency, and there can be no doubt our laws making it piracy must be blotted out of the Statute Books. They are not only ridiculous, but utterly and wholly contemptible," etc. From the point

94 Historic Sketches of the South

of view of a large class of Southerners these arguments were not fallacious. Yet they were retrogressive and their revival put the South out of harmony with ethical and intellectual progress, and defeated the hopes of those of larger vision. Early in 1859 the Mobile papers lent their support to the question. Mobilians, like all of the South, were tried to their utmost, and Meaher knew if all due secrecy was observed, he had little to fear from them.

Captain Foster reached Mobile on a Sunday morning in August (1859) with the secret that the *Clotilde* lay behind the islands in Mississippi Sound. Arrangements had long been made that a tug should lie in readiness to go at a moment's notice down Mobile Bay to tow the *Clotilde* and her cargo to safety. When the news came, the tug's pilot was attending service at St. John's Church. Captain Jim Meaher and James Dennison—a negro slave—hurried to the church. Dennison remained outside while Meaher went in to call the pilot. The three hastened down to the wharf, and were soon aboard the tug *Billy Jones*, steaming rapidly down the bay. Late afternoon found

them nearing the *Clotilde*, but they waited for the darkness. The most dangerous part of the adventure was still ahead—the trip up Mobile Bay. At the mouth the marshes and islands offered protection; if they could once reach the delta of the Mobile River, with its desolate stretches of marsh, its deep rivers and intricate bayous, safety was almost assured. But the bay lay smilingly open between two long arms of land. Her wonderful beauty under the gorgeous August sunset was lost upon the watchers; they prayed for the light to fade and for mysterious night with its enshrouding darkness. At last as if loath to die, the color was gone; sea and sky melted together into almost impenetrable grayness. They ceased their vigils and fell to a quick activity; lines were thrown, the *Clotilde* made fast, and the trip up the bay was begun. Her wooded shores had echoed the voices of many peoples and the sounds from many craft, but never any more epoch-making—those from the last slave ship—the voyage nearing its finish which ended forever among Anglo-Saxon people the darkest blot upon their civilization. The chugging sound of the tug's machinery filled

96 Historic Sketches of the South

the Tarkars with terrified wonder; at last they concluded that it was the swarming of bees.

Time was precious and the darkness doubly so; much was still to be done before day with its light should come. These hours might mean life or death. The trip up the bay was safely made. The tug avoided the Mobile River channel, slipped behind the light-house on Battery Gladden, into Spanish River. This lay in the midst of the marsh and with its circuitous windings was not more than ten miles long. As the *Clotilde* passed opposite Mobile the clock in the old Spanish tower struck eleven, and the watchman's voice floated over the city and across the marshes, "Eleven o'clock and all 's well."

The *Clotilde* was taken directly to Twelve-Mile Island—a lonely, weird place by night. There the *R. B. Tainey*¹ waited; lights were smothered, and in the darkness quickly and quietly the

¹ The *R. B. Tainey* was owned by the Meahers, and is described in advertisements of that time as a "new, elegant, and light-weight summer packet; Captain Jim Meaher. Side-wheeler, drawing eight inches of water with elegant and spacious staterooms and large well-ventilated cabins, carrying one hundred and fifty passengers." She had been named for Chief Justice Tainey who had handed down the famous Dred Scott decision.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1 L



Drawn by Emma Roche.

Kazoola.

Clotilde's cargo of one hundred and sixteen negroes was transferred to the steamboat, taken up the Alabama River to John Dabney's plantation below Mount Vernon and not far from the shadow of the fort, where they were landed before noon of the next day.

At Twelve-Mile Island the crew of Northern sailors again mutinied. Captain Foster, with a six shooter in each hand, went among them, discharged them, and ordered them to "hit the grit and never be seen in Southern waters again." They were placed aboard the tug. Meaher bought tickets and saw that they boarded a train for the North. The *Clotilde* was scuttled and fired, Captain Foster himself placed seven cords of light wood upon her. Her hull still lies in the marsh at the mouth of Bayou Corne and may be seen at low tide. Foster afterwards regretted her destruction as she was worth more than the ten Africans given him by the Meahers as his booty.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TARKARS AT DABNEY'S PLANTATION

DABNEY'S plantation lay in the cane brake country—a part of the river region, so-called from the miles of towering cane. It was a wilderness, every part strangely alike, in which even those most familiar with it could be easily lost. Here, according to the narrative of James Dennison, the slave who was left in charge and who afterwards married Kanko—one of their number—and of the surviving Tarkars, they were kept for eleven days, but in a state of constant change, being transferred each day from one part of the swamp to another. They were allowed to speak only in whispers, for there was a chance that some one passing on the river might hear strange voices. At the end of the eleventh day clothes were brought to them and they were put aboard the steamer *Commodore* and carried to The Bend in Clark

The Tarkars at Dabney's Plantation 99

County, where the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers meet and where Burns Meaher had a plantation.

There they were lodged each night under a wagon shed, and driven each morning before daybreak back into the swamp, where they remained until dark. Understanding no word and knowing not what was expected of them, they were made to know the driver's wishes by a shooping sound—such as would drive chickens or geese. In this strange land, among strange faces and an unknown tongue, the Tarkars say that at first they almost grieved themselves to death.

Meaher sent word secretly to those disposed to buy. They were piloted to the place of concealment by Jim Dennison. The Africans were placed in two long rows, the women on one side and the men on the other—the buyers standing between, and carefully examining them—even looking at their teeth. Those selected would be put to one side, and when the purchaser was ready to depart, he would make his ownership known to them by waving his hand around the group selected, then bringing it to his breast. The Tarkars could

375678B

100 Historic Sketches of the South

not understand these transactions—they only knew their numbers were gradually growing less. Day after day they saw some of their kinsmen or comrades led away—to what fate they knew not. Some were sold and taken to Selma. Of their march through the woods one pathetic and picturesque incident has come to me. As they marched through the strange land—tired, dejected, friendless—knowing not where they were going or what would be their destiny—a circus, moving from place to place, chanced to pass along the country road. To avoid danger or suspicion, the Africans were concealed behind the bushes with their backs to the passing show. As it passed, one of the elephants trumpeted; joy transformed the Tarkars, spread over their features, and ran through their limbs. To them the sound was as a cry from home, and as with one voice, gesticulating, tears streaming from their eyes, they shouted: “Elé, Elé! Argenacou, Argenacou!” (“Home, Home! Elephant, Elephant!”) Of this small band—two still live—a man and wife—and those of the tribe near Mobile still receive news of them now and then.

The Tarkars at Dabney's Plantation 101

As time passed and the Tarkars continued inconsolable, Captain Tim Meaher recommended that they be put to some kind of work. They look back upon this as the first happy episode of their life in the new land. When they were taken into the fields for the first time, their astonishment was very great when they saw civilization's agricultural methods. "We astonish to see the mule behind the plow to pull" (Kazoola). The contrast in fertility made them feel that the American soil was accursed and their own blessed. There they had but to scratch the top soil and whatever they planted grew; but in America there was nothing but "work, work, work." The Tarkar would stand for no mistreatment. Once an overseer attempted something which the women considered as such and he was overpowered by them and given a sound thrashing. Naturally of agricultural and industrious habits they soon came to understand Southern crops and were very successful in raising corn, cotton, beans, peas, cane, pumpkins, etc. This experience was of great advantage to them when they were afterwards thrown upon their own resources. Their homes

102 Historic Sketches of the South

to-day are characterized by excellent gardens and many varieties of fruit trees.

After war was declared there was little danger of exposure, and the Africans belonging to Foster, to Jim and Tim Meaher were taken to the Meaher settlement, at what is known to-day as Magazine Point, where they were kindly treated by their respective owners. Those left at Burns Meaher's plantation tell of great hardship. When they first arrived they were given one pair of shoes and never any more. Before daybreak they were sent to the fields to work and kept hard at it until night, when they returned home by torchlight. After the surrender, these joined the others of their tribe at Magazine Point.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
B I L



Wreck of the "Clotilde."

CHAPTER IX

TARKAR LIFE IN AMERICA

MAGAZINE POINT—the site of Meaher's mill and ship-yard—though but three miles from Mobile, was inaccessible, except by water or a circuitous route of some miles by land. Between the two places lay an impenetrable swamp and forest. Red clay hills rolled away from the northern border of this jungle, diversifying the strip of country between Three Mile Creek and Chickasabogue. This extensive area was known as Meaher's hummock and was thickly wooded by a suburb forest of native trees—pine, cypress, bays, magnolias, beech, junipers, gums, and oaks. These had sheltered the goings and comings of many peoples. This place had been beloved by the Indians; some still lingered on among what the Tarkars called the "high trees," living in their pine-bark tepees. During the Spanish régime it had been included in the grant of land known as the St. Louis tract,

104 Historic Sketches of the South

and Dr. Charles Mohr points out in his *Plant Life in Alabama* that it must have been a feeding place for migratory birds, for tropical plants are found there which are not known to other parts of the coast. Near the mouth of Chickasabogue, overlooking the river, there is a prehistoric shell-mound, overgrown by patriarchal live-oaks, hundreds of years old, and on this the Tarkars had their first dwellings. Much has been told and written by casual visitors of the queer rites and superstitions of "Africa-Town"—the little cluster of huts which have long since been abandoned—none of which is substantiated by fact or by the actual knowledge of those who have known and appreciated the Tarkars. But nothing has been told of the other superstitions with which this region fairly reeks.

Until the saw-mills became so active there were old beeches near Chickasabogue and Hog Bayou, bearing seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth century dates and curious signs which substantiated the belief of the credulous and imaginative that through this district there was much hidden treasure—treasure buried by early adven-

turers, by the pirates, and in later times by members of the Copeland gang—and safely guarded by the spirits of those who had concealed it. Though this tract is now largely cleared and settled, these traditions and ghost stories are still told and believed by the negroes, creoles, and ignorant whites. Poinquinette, an old creole fisherman and a repository of interesting lore, has related some of his personal encounters with the Magazine Point ghosts, and so real are they to him, and so vivid his narrative, that his listeners are thrilled with a sort of belief. By a dream it was once made known to him and several companions (Nelson, Sales, Moody, Ebernezar Fisher, and a man named Robinson) that there was a treasure buried just below Turner & Oats's mill. The spot was thickly wooded—high trees and low shrubs—yet not so dense that they could not see about them—even a bird was visible as it flew through the brush. They went early one Friday morning and began digging at seven o'clock. Almost as soon as their spades touched the earth, the woods began to resound with voices—child voices—and they wondered where children's voices could come from,

106 Historic Sketches of the South

but went on with their digging. As the excavation progressed, the sounds came nearer—there were calling and crying and hissing—until finally the voices were right at them and surrounding them. They could hear the voices but could see nothing. Then the voices passed by them with a whirr and back again into the bushes where they were still heard. By this time the hole was some ten feet deep. Nelson Sales, who had had more experience with spirits than the others, offered to go back into the woods and talk to the voices. He was confronted by a fearful apparition—a great blue bull with eyes of fire and a tail as large as a hogshead. It dashed passed him, charged across the hole, and as it went over threw all the earth back, completely filling the excavation. They were all thoroughly frightened and would not go back until they could get the negress Clara Randall, from Charleston. Poinquinette was loud in his praises of this woman, who could see and talk to spirits and was not afraid of them.

She built a tent and camped alone for three days and nights at the scene of their labor. She set a

table, provided with milk from a white cow, wine, and honey—inveigling the invisible ones and tempting them by food to give up the secret of the buried treasure. At the end of the third day her persuasions prevailed, and the spirits reluctantly made known the place. Next morning she walked to the spot and placed her foot where the men should dig. They fell to work and had not dug more than twenty minutes, before the top of the treasure-box was uncovered. They rapidly cleared the earth from around it and there lay before their eager wondering eyes a cedar chest which measured five feet in length, two and a half feet wide, and two and a half feet deep. It contained three hundred and fifty thousand dollars in gold, and Ebernezar Fisher, over-zealous and over-anxious, bored two holes in it with an auger. While he was boring the second, the woman warned him to stop—that the spirits were regretting their revelation—but Ebernezar, who was of stubborn temperament, bored on unheedful of her warning. It was a bright day—not a cloud in the sky—the sunlight filtered through the trees and fell in strong beams upon the auger. The other men,

108 Historic Sketches of the South

standing to one side, watched it glinting on the steel. Again the woman warned Fisher, and as she spoke his arm was wrenched from the auger. Almost at the same instant a black cloud swept across the sky, an awful gust of wind bent the great trees until they looked as if they would break, a crash of thunder and a blinding flash of lightning and the box disappeared! Then all was clear and bright again. It was a spirit storm—purely local, and seen only by the searchers after treasure. “Then all of us had to come away like sick cats and with aching hearts, because we hated to see a treasure like that disappear. It’s there somewhere to-day—and wherever it is, Ebernezar Fisher’s auger is still sticking in it.”

Another time they received intimation that they should go to Meaher’s hummock and hunt a mound and some trees bearing marks like an inverted E; then walk so many feet in a certain direction and dig. On this occasion they took old Adam Boone, a negro who was supposed to have found many hidden treasures. They found the marked trees and the mound, which was six or seven feet high and looked as if it had been

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R. J. L.



Charlee.

built by man. They had just arrived, identified the spot, and were grouped around it talking. Ebernezar Fisher, who was tall, stood with the butt of his gun resting on the ground, and held it with one hand near the end of the barrel. Both hammers were down. Old Adam Smith was saying, "I've been hearin' of this place a long time. They say several men were killed and buried here." As the last words were uttered, one barrel of Fisher's gun went off, and he was so startled that he threw it from him; Charlie Tell who was sitting on the ground near him caught it and as he did so the other barrel went off. Needless to add that the seekers for gold left the spot as quickly as they could and have never gone back again.

There are places in the woods and among the hills where no one can go—unless very brave and then not to stay long—for there are sounds as of the march of soldiers, the clank of their swords, and the orders of the captains. Whoever goes to these places will have to fight the spirits and there is no hope of overpowering them, for they change their forms into those of many "varmint" and especially do they affect the ones that the intruder most fears.

110 Historic Sketches of the South

Some of these superstitions were repeated to the Tarkars with the hope of drawing them out and learning just what they believed. They accepted them and Olouala offered the solution of the spirits' faithful guardianship as it had been explained to him by American negroes. To make this guardianship effective the promise must be obtained during the life of the body. "Suppose some one has a treasure he wishes to conceal—perhaps to bury. He may pick out you who he has never seen before. Perhaps he asks, 'Do you want to earn ten dollars?' Of course you do, so you go with him. After he gets to the place where he wishes to bury the gold, he says, 'I have a treasure here which I wish to bury. But I have to go away—will you promise to watch it until I come back?' You unsuspectingly promise and as you do so you are killed and your body buried with the treasure that your spirit may guard it forever." Instead of a person a faithful and intelligent dog or horse may be sacrificed. This, however, is not a Tarkar superstition, but is common to our negro and creole population. The Tarkars during their long residence have explored

every foot of this region in their searches for game, berries, fruits, and herbs and they have never had any encounters with the Magazine Point ghosts or any intimation of their presence. Kazoola, however, naively intimated that he would prefer not to know where they were located, as he might have occasion to go to these places, and if he did not know where these ghosts were supposed to be, he would not be annoyed or frightened by seeing them.

The life of the Tarkars in America has not been characterized by the superstitions ascribed to them; instead their history has been one of hard work, coöperation, self-sacrifice, and a deep longing for home. Their progress has been deeply interesting. Almost entirely cut off from white influence—and that with which they came in contact during their early years in this country could scarcely inspire them with confidence, for they are keenly watchful and observed the advantage which one white took over another—yet protected by our laws, they have worked out their destiny with much more success and honor to themselves than the generality of American-born

112 Historic Sketches of the South

negroes or of the free blacks who were carried by the American Colonization Society back to Africa, and whose interests have been guarded and furthered by philanthropists.

When the Tarkars first came to Magazine Point all days were alike to them; they went about doing on Sundays as on other days. Some American negroes who had become interested in them and who were really their friends requested them not to work on Sundays but to gather all their women and children and go with them. They were thus introduced to a church. There they were told that the God who lived in the sky had sent a book to the people of the earth, telling them how they must live. Simple and believing, they readily accepted what was told. The Old Testament and the dualistic dogma of a God and a Devil made the same appeal to them that it had to the American negro—there was the ready response of the primitive imagination to a primitive story. In them they found an amplification of the gropings of their own minds into the spiritual. It soothed their sorrows and gave them hope. Their faith became a simple one, and that of the few old survivors is

one of resignation, hope, and a perfect trust. Po-leette has said: "We know not why these troubles came upon us, but we are all God's children—we not always see the way, but his hands guide us and shape our ends." Kazoola, in speaking of the death of his wife and of all his children, likened God to the doctor who "gives us bad medicine—it's hard to swallow, but the doctor gives it to us to do us good. We don't understand why." Though Kazoola has an intense longing for home, he regards his advent to America as a part of the goodness of God and enjoys telling how after Foster had bought him at Whydah, he was stolen by one of Dahomey's men and hidden under the white house. While concealed, he heard the surf upon the beach. Urged by an innate curiosity about the mechanism of things, he stole from his hiding-place and climbed upon the stockade fence; "I hear the noise of the sea on shore, an' I wanta see what maka dat noise, an' how dat water worka—how it fell on shore an' went back again. I saw some of my people in a little boat and I holler to them. Then Captain Foster spied me, an' he say, 'Oh hee! Oh hee!' an' pulla me down. An'

114 Historic Sketches of the South

I was the last to go. Supposy I been lef' behind—what become of Kazoola? Or supposy de ship turna over, an' de sharks eat us. Oh Lor'! God is good!"

Mrs. Foster, who always lived near the Tarkars, said they have always been gentle, amiable, and honest and much better than the average American negro; that it was their perseverance and religious zeal which built the several churches which are now at Magazine Point. There was only one among them who proved unregenerate—old Zooma who still lives—but she belonged to another tribe, the Tarkbar, and presents totally different characteristics; also different color, physical development, and tribal marks. She has been seen to make a cross and spit in the middle of it. The others do not seem to understand her motive.

After the surrender the Tarkars wished to go back to their own country but had no money. They concluded to save. They worked in the mills for a dollar a day, but could not save without help, so they said to their wives, "Now we want to go home and it takes a lot of money. You must help us save. You see fine clothes—you

must not crave them." The wives promised and replied: " *You* see fine clothes and new hats—now don't you crave them either. We will work together." They made six dollars a week. Of this they could save two dollars, sometimes three, but they had rent to pay and found they could not get ahead that way, for it would take a lot of money to get home. Among themselves they talked over the injustice of their position—how Meaher had brought them from their native land and how they now had neither home nor country. Kazoola, who seems to have always been a spokesman, concluded he would present their case to Meaher. Soon after he was cutting timber (just back of where the schoolhouse now stands), Captain Tim Meaher came along and sat upon a felled tree. Kazoola recognized this to be his opportunity, stopped work, and stood looking at Meaher, all his emotion speaking through his expressive face. The captain looked up from the stick he was whittling and struck by the sorrow in the man's face asked:

"Kazoola, what makes you so sad?"

"I grieve for my home."

116 Historic Sketches of the South

"But you've got a good home."

"Captain Tim, how big is Mobile?"

"I don't know, I've never been to the four corners."

"If you give Kazoola all Mobile, that railroad, and the banks of Mobile Kazoola does not want them for this is not home."

When the old man tells this his face reflects overwhelming grief—in his eyes there is the far-away vision of home, and in a low voice he moans, "Oh Lor'! Oh Lor'!" Then he regains himself and goes on with his narrative.

"Captain Tim, you brought us from our country where we had land and home. You made us slaves. Now we are free, without country, land, or home. Why don't you give us a piece of this land and let us build for ourselves an African Town?"

Kazoola relates Meaher's reply very dramatically.

"Thou fool! Thinkest thou I will give you property upon property? You do not belong to me now!"

The Tarkars concluded to buy. When one reached this conclusion, the others said: "If you

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R J L



Drawn by Emma Roche.

Olouala.

are going to buy, we will too." They bought property from Meaher, who made them no concessions. They worked and saved, going half clad and living upon half rations. Though accustomed in their own country to Nature's luxuries, they now lived on molasses and corn-bread or mush (boiled corn-meal). The men worked in the mills and their wives helped by planting gardens and fruit trees and becoming venders of fruit and vegetables. Their Tarkar home began to be a chimera; day after day new ties pushed it farther away.

Having no head of the tribe, and understanding that in a country of different institutions a king would be incongruous, they selected Charlee (Orsey, in Tarkar), Gumpa (African Peter), and Jaybee as judges to preside over the colony, to arbitrate their differences, and direct their lives. When disagreements came up, word would be sent each member that there would be a meeting at a certain place after dark—their only leisure time—possibly at the home of one of the judges.¹

¹ These meetings probably account for the reports which have been recurrent that the Tarkars met secretly and practiced barbaric rites.

118 Historic Sketches of the South

The offenders would be given a hearing before the whole colony—each side would be weighed and each reprimanded with a warning to “go and keep the peace.” If they again broke it, or renewed their disagreements, they were punished—Jaybee, Gumpa, or Charlee administering a whipping to the culprits. Of these judges, there lives to-day only Charlee, who has passed the century mark and is¹ tottering on the brink of the grave. Yet the nine surviving Tarkars, and each of these has seen his three-score years and ten, look upon him as the head, observe his admonitions, and never disobey him. His face is one of the most kindly and he is known among his people as never having disputed or disagreed with any one. As old as they are, if Charlee told them they could not do a thing, no matter how strong the desire, they would not disobey. The judges were not considered above reproach. If any of the colony saw one of them doing that which was wrong, he would be rebuked: “We saw you do this thing. It is not right. How do you expect us to do right if you do not show us the way?”

¹ Charlee too has recently passed away, 1914.

About ten years after the close of the Civil War, when the South was still largely under carpetbag régime, interest in elections was intense and the outcome of vital importance to the community. Opposing parties used almost any means at their command to obtain votes. Meaher went among the Tarkars, explaining the methods and significance of voting and urging them to vote the Democratic ticket. He was followed by some Republicans who promised them great rewards. They talked this new thing over among themselves and concluded that by voting the Republican ticket they would gain much good. On election day, Olouala, Poleete, and Kazoola walked, one behind the other (a Tarkar custom), to the polls at Whistler. Meaher was there; he pointed them out, "See those Africans? Don't let them vote—they are not of this country." They were refused so walked to McGuire's, but Meaher who had been watching them and knew their persistency, had ridden ahead and forestalled them; they were again refused. This only whetted their desire and their determination, and they walked on down St. Stephen's Road to the next voting place.

120 Historic Sketches of the South

Arriving there, Meaher was just getting off his horse. "Don't let those Africans vote—they have no right—they are not of this country." Defeated again, the three now wanted to vote so badly, that they put their hands together, raised them to the sky, and prayed God that He would permit them to vote. Strengthened, they walked on to Mobile and at the polls on St. Francis Street told their experience. They were informed that by paying one dollar they could vote. This they did and received a paper which they still treasure. It was their one experience in politics, and it was satisfying for they accomplished what they had set out to do, though the great promises never materialized.

Of the one hundred and sixteen Africans who were brought to this country in the *Clotilde*, there are only eight living: five women, Abaché (Clara Turner), Monabee (Kitty Cooper), Shamber, Kanko (who married Jim Dennison), and Zooma; and three men, Poleete, Kazoola (Cudjoe Lewis), and Olouala (Orsey Kan). Their Tarkar names have been used in this narrative at their request. They love them and with some

pathos asked that they be used, because in some way these names might drift back to their native home, where some might remember them. This small fragment gathers on Sundays after church at the home of Poleete, Kazoola, or Abaché and discuss among themselves the things pertaining to their welfare, and they never part without speaking of their African home and telling some incident of that beloved place. Kazoola says he often thinks that if he had wings he would fly back; then he remembers that all he has lies in American soil—the wife who came from his native land, who was his helpmate and companion through the many years, and all his children. It was at some of these Sunday afternoon gatherings that he made the parables about his wife, Albiné (Celie), which are a solace to him in his sorrow and loneliness. The Sunday after her death, the Tarkars were sitting with Kazoola in his home. He sat with head bowed down, grief-stricken, and speaking no word. They said, “Lift up your head, Kazoola, and speak with us.” Kazoola lifted his head; “I will make a parable. Kazoola and Albiné have gone to Mobile together. They

122 Historic Sketches of the South

get on the train to go home and sit side by side. The conductor comes along and says to Kazoola, 'Where are you going to get off?' and Kazoola replies, 'Mount Vernon.' The conductor then asks Albiné, 'Where are you going to get off?' and she replies 'Plateau.'¹ Kazoola surprised, turns to Albiné and asks, 'Why, Albiné! How is this? Why do you say you are going to get off at Plateau?' She answers, 'I must get off.' The train stops and Albiné gets off. Kazoola stays on—he is alone. But old Kazoola has not reached Mount Vernon yet—he is still journeying on."

On the next Sunday they were again gathered at Kazoola's house; again he sat with bowed head, and again they asked him to lift up his head and make another parable.

"Suppose Charlee comes to my house and wants to go on to Poleete's. He has an umbrella which he leaves in my care. When he comes back he asks for his umbrella—must I give it to him or must I keep it?"

The listening Tarkars cried out, "No, Kazoola! You cannot keep it—it is not yours!"

¹ Mount Vernon is some miles beyond Plateau.

And Kazoola answered, "Neither could I keep Albiné; she was just left in my care."¹

Kazoola never married again; he sees Albiné everywhere about the house. Everything reminds him of her. One day he was working in his corn-patch, weeding out superfluous stalks. He came to two growing together—the root of one intertwined with the other. He started to pull one out, but something within told him to stop, that thus had he and Albiné grown together and one stalk could not be pulled up without hurting the other. So he saved the two, giving them especial care, and he was rewarded by each bearing four ears of corn. These he was going to save for seed and grieves that a cow should have gotten in and destroyed them. The old man is cheerful—even merry—possessing a keen sense of humor and a lively imagination. To appreciate him fully he must be surprised at his home. There he will be found probably working in his garden.

¹ When Albiné first came to America she was very fat and refused to eat except just enough to keep her alive. When she grew to have confidence in the whites, she confided to Mrs. Foster, "Albiné not eat when she first come to America, because Albiné know she fat an' did not want white people to eat her."

124 Historic Sketches of the South

barefooted, trousers rolled up above his knees; his costume clean but a marvelous piece of patch-work, even the old derby upon his head a much mended one. His patches need elicit no sympathy, for patching is an accomplishment in which he takes keen delight; even in the old days when his Albiné was alive, she would wash his clothes and lay them aside for him to patch during the evenings when the day's work was done.

The Tarkars range in color from light to a very dark brown. All bear upon their faces the Tarkar tribal marks—two lines between the eyes and three on the cheek. While quite distinct, these marks are not disfiguring. Their teeth bear the marks of family and of kinship and vary in each. The process of marking the teeth was by pecking with a stone implement. The lower corners of Poleete's two front teeth where they meet are pecked off, forming a wedge-shaped opening like an inverted V. When Kazoola's teeth are closed, on one side there is a circular opening which was formed by cutting off parts of a half-dozen teeth. Six of Abache's upper front teeth are trimmed to make a convex opening. The Tarkars differ in

feature from the American negro; it is a subtle difference but runs through the whole face. Their heads differ structurally—the line from the forehead to the chin is nearer straight. They have more top head and there is a fullness indicating plenty of intelligence—a possession they have exhibited in their neat homes and thrifty lives. Some of them have even learned to read; this was taught them by their children who have profited by the public schools. Poleete's constant companion is a small, much worn New Testament. Their countenances naturally vary with their temperaments. Abaché's and Kazoola's are as open as a book—intensely emotional and capable of expressing very deep feeling. None have gotten over the shock of their early experience. When these are referred to there comes into Kazoola's and Abaché's faces unspeakable and indescribable anguish. Poleete's is like a mask, unchanging, unscrutable, except for the eyes, and these—small, deep-set, watchful—are almost uncanny.

Among themselves they speak the Tarkar language. Their English is very broken and is not

126 Historic Sketches of the South

always intelligible even to those who have lived among them for many years. It has more the sound of the dialect spoken by Italians than that spoken by the negroes. They make almost constant use of the "a" sound as a terminal—looka, pulla, worka, etc. Their sentences are short and vivid. The few words of old Gumpa, "My people sold me and your people bought me," accompanied by his expression, told his whole history.

They are extremely clean both about their persons and their homes, and one of their strongest objections to the average American negro is uncleanliness. Abaché parts her hair in the middle and combs it neatly back. She uses face powder, because it is refreshing and leaves a cleanly feeling. The other women are very old and feeble, except Kanko who, though old, works as a man. Her especial occupation is the breeding and raising of a fine strain of hogs. The Tarkars are very considerate of each other, and their intercourse is marked by kindness, charity, and harmony.

In strong contrast to the Tarkars is old Zooma, who is possibly the last Tarkbar. Rendered

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 3 L



A small, stylized signature or mark, possibly the artist's initials, located to the right of the caption.

Drawn by Emma Roche.

Charlee, Head of the Tarkars.

almost helpless^d by a century and more of years and many pounds of superfluous flesh, she sits for the most part silent and brooding in her squalid hut. If near the door or window there are no softening shadows, and the light reveals all her fat, brutal old ugliness—an ugliness, accentuated by disfiguring tribal marks—three deep gashes meeting at the bridge of the nose, and running diagonally across each cheek. Her underlip hangs away as if it had been subjected in her native land to some kind of African beautifying process. Her hair is white and the skin of her hands and feet wrinkled, resembling in texture that of an elephant, and bearing the curious gray color seen in the complexions of very old negroes. It is almost impossible to understand her broken phrases, but a daughter acts as interpreter. Brooding, she is pathetic; aroused and speaking of home she is tragic. She has in common with the Tarkars the same pitiful history and the same despair, without their resignation. For each and all, Heaven could hold no promise so rapturous as just one last vision of home. Such a vision that comes as they sit together, which bows their old heads, lays

128 Historic Sketches of the South

silent fingers upon their lips, and speaks to their aching hearts of perpetual summer, fertile lands, abundance of fruit—of youth, plenty, and peace—their Land of Long Ago.

CHAPTER X

IMPRESSIONS OF ALABAMA IN 1846¹

THE trip of Lafayette through this country in the twenties was more or less spectacular, and the places he visited are to-day pointed out as historic, yet only twenty years later Lyell, whose name will go down the ages linked with Goethe, Lamarck, and Darwin, covered much the same ground, and it is only in scientific works that one is reminded of the fact. In recent reading, after meeting with several references to his stay in Alabama, I became interested, and it was with intense delight that I was carried back and saw our own section through the eyes of that wonderful observer and thinker. All awe of Charles Lyell, scientist and arch-destroyer of the anthropocentric idea which for so many centuries fettered the world of thought, was at once dispelled, for there was that in his charming geniality that makes the "whole world

¹ Reprinted from *South Atlantic Quarterly*, July, 1908.

130 Historic Sketches of the South

kin"—even a Charles Lyell and the pine-woods squatter, whose hospitality he often accepted when on geologic excursions.

Lyell made two trips to the United States—the first in 1841-42, which furnished material for his *Travels in North America*. He came as far south as Savannah. His *Travels in the United States* is the record of his second visit, when Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana formed a part of his itinerary. Aside from the geologic importance of these two works, there could scarcely be a more faithful portrayal of American manners, customs, and peculiarities. They were largely instrumental in ameliorating British animosity by giving the English a better and kindlier understanding of Americans. At the time of their publication, they naturally found in this country a circulation only among the few, and are now rare books. His observations on the social conditions that made the South unique and that have been obliterated during the lapse of a half century are deeply interesting to the student of to-day.

On January 15, 1846, we find Lyell and his wife entering Macon, Georgia, by train. His eye was

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

R 1 L



Kazoola.

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 131

immediately attracted by "a wooden edifice of very peculiar structure and picturesque form, crowning one of the hills." Learning that it was a blockhouse that had been in real service as a fort against Indians only twenty-five years before, when this frontier knew not the white man's habitat, it was with a mixed feeling of amusement and incongruity that he received the information that a conspicuous building nearby was a "female seminary, lately established by the Methodists, where all young ladies take degrees."

From Macon to Columbus, Georgia, he had his first experience in a Southern stage-coach which, while novel, must have proved far from comfortable, for he did not forget to record the jolts caused by miserable roads and reckless driving. Leaving Columbus he was soon in the undulating pine-lands of Alabama, the monotony of which was frequently broken by swamps of palmetto and magnolia. The spirit of the pines must have sung to him, too, for the "sound of the wind in the boughs of the long-leaved pine" always reminded him of the "waves breaking on a distant shore, and it was agreeable to hear it swelling gradually, then

132 Historic Sketches of the South

dying away as the breeze rose and fell." Near Chehaw, the stage stopped at a log cabin in the woods for the passengers to dine. It did not look promising, and Lyell was ready to "put up with bad fare," but on entering found on the table "a wild turkey roasted, venison steaks, and a partridge-pie, all the product of the neighboring forest." Noticing the stumps of many pines, he counted the rings of annual growth to ascertain how long it would take to replace such a forest. The oldest tree that he examined measured four feet in diameter at three feet above the base, and showed three hundred and twenty rings. He also found the ravines that are common throughout Southern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi to be of recent formation and caused by deforestation, showing the tertiary regions and also part of the cretaceous strata which have "always been as destructible as now" to have been from the beginning covered with dense forests. Where the trees have been cut, the sun's heat on the clay often causes cracks, and when the rains come in semi-tropical torrents these deepen until such ravines as are familiar to Mobilians about Spring

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 133

Hill are the result—only they are of more rapid growth.

At Chehaw they took train for Montgomery. Even at that early time, and in a region “where the schoolmaster has not been much abroad,” we meet the prototype of the newsboy of to-day; Lyell’s picture of him unconcernedly jumping on and off moving trains is the “butcher-boy” we all know. One boy was calling out in the midst of a pine-barren, “a novel by Paul de Kock—the Bulwer of France—all the go!—more popular than the Wandering Jew.” Lyell, having bought newspapers promiscuously throughout the many States he visited, found our press to be in every way on an equal with that of Great Britain. A large portion of the papers was “devoted to literary extracts, to novels, travels, tales, and often more serious subjects.”

Reaching Montgomery, he remained there a few days examining the geologic formations and remains of that region. It was his intention to go directly to Tuscaloosa, only one hundred miles distant by land, but every one advised him that he would at that season save both time and money

134 Historic Sketches of the South

by taking an eight hundred mile trip down the Alabama River by boat to Mobile, and up again on the Tombigbee. The *Amaranth* was scheduled to leave at ten o'clock, January 28, 1846. Accustomed to Northern punctuality, they went down on time, and learned with some annoyance that she might not sail until the next day. It was his first sight of our "magnificent Southern river boats." He and Mrs. Lyell made up their minds to look on it as "their inn and read and write there" and were soon enjoying "its luxuries which Southern manners and a hot climate require." He describes very fully the peculiar construction which adapts the boats to rivers which rise and fall rapidly. When recording that some of them could float in two feet of water, he adds, "but they cannot quite realize the boast of a western captain, that he could sail wherever it was damp."

It would be too much to write in detail of all the things which interested Lyell, for nothing seems to have escaped him. At each landing, however, he collected many cretaceous fossils, so concluded to stop a few days at Claiborne, whose bluff had long been known to geologists as "classic ground,"

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 135

having already yielded four hundred species of tertiary shells, belonging to the Eocene formation. He notes, too, the finding of a fossil zeuglodon in the same cliff by Mr. Hale of Mobile. "The morning after our arrival, January 29th, the thermometer stood at eighty degrees F. in the shade, and the air was as balmy as an English summer day. Before the house stood a row of Pride-of-India trees ladened with bunches of yellow berries. I had often been told by the negroes that the American robin 'got drunk' on this fruit, and we now had an opportunity of witnessing its narcotic properties; for we saw some children playing with one of these birds before the house, having caught it after it had eaten freely of these berries. My wife, seeing that the robin was in no small danger of perishing, bought it of the children for some sugar-plums, and it soon revived in our room, and flew out of the window. In the evening we enjoyed a sight of one of those glorious sunsets, the beauty of which in these latitudes is so striking, when the clouds and sky are lighted up with streaks of brilliant yellow, red, and green, which, if a painter should represent

136 Historic Sketches of the South

faithfully, might seem as exaggerated and gaudy as the colors of an American forest in autumn when compared with European woods."

He crossed the river to visit the Blounts at Woodlawn. Leaving his wife with Mrs. Blount, he went with Mr. Blount by carriage to Clarks-ville, where the enormous fossil zeuglodons had been found. "The district we passed through was situated in the fork of the Alabama and Tom-beckbee rivers, where the aboriginal forest was only broken here and there by a few clearings. At Macon my attention was forcibly called to the newness of things by my friend's pointing out to me the ground where there had been a bloody fight with the Choctaws and Chickasaws, and how the clerk of the Circuit Court was the last survivor of those who had won the battle." The Indian paths, still tractable through the forests near Tuscaloosa, awakened the same feeling. On his return he and his wife crossed to Claiborne to await the Mobile steamer, and he expresses his pleasure at finding it, the *Amaranth*, commanded by his "old friend Captain Bragdon."

Reaching Mobile, the Tuscaloosa steamer was

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 137

ready to start, so they were soon northward bound on the Tombeckbee, then so high "that the trees of both banks seemed to be growing in a lake." Arriving at Tuscaloosa where there was a "flourishing college" he was met by Mr. Brumley, the professor of chemistry who at once conducted him to the outlying coal-fields. He found the coal, even of the strata exposed to the surface to be "excellent quality and highly bituminous." Here there is a bit of justification in Huxley's criticism of Lyell's aversion "to look beyond the veil of stratified rocks," for while he notes with seeming satisfaction the imprints of the fossil plants in the black shale to be exactly the same as those existing in the "ancient coal-measures of Europe and America," there is no foreshadowing of the explanation given by recent geology and astronomy, that even as late as the early carboniferous era, there were no seasons, the earth being wrapped in a uniform, vaporous warmth greater than the heat now existing in the tropics; a heat which came not from the sun, but the earth itself. One proof lies in the fact that irrespective of latitude, the same organic remains are found—their

138 Historic Sketches of the South

nearest of kin of to-day living only in the tropics; also that there are no rings of annual growth in carboniferous tree-life.

Lyell and Professor Brumley extending their wanderings, "entered about thirty-three miles northeast of Tuscaloosa a region called Rooke's Valley, where rich beds of iron-stone and limestone bid fair, by their proximity to the coal, to become one day a source of great mineral wealth." He was not only indebted to Professor Brumley for much scientific information, but also to Mr. Bernard, the teacher of astronomy, who showed him some "double stars and constellations not visible in England,"—the telescope a recent acquisition from London. Mrs. Lyell also made many friends in Tuscaloosa, among them two ladies who were reading as a "pastime Goethe and Schiller in the original."

From Tuscaloosa to Mobile Lyell had splendid chances of studying the geological character of the country, and he frequently expresses appreciation of the courtesy and assistance always given him throughout Alabama, contrasting it with the "ignorant wonder" the fossil hunter inspires in

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
B 1 L



Zooma, the Last Tarkbar.

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 139

unfrequented districts of England, France, and Italy. He was anxious to examine the calcareous bluff at St. Stephen's. Night fell before they reached it, but Captain Lavargy stopped, said he could take on wood, gave him a boat and two negroes bearing pine torches, thus making it possible for him to thoroughly explore the whole cliff and find many fossils.

Mobile again claims him on February 21, 1846, and flaunts her spring forwardness by touches of green on the cypress and cotton trees, and scarlet seed-vessels on the rubra. "In the gardens there were jonquils and snow-drops in flower, and for the first time, we saw that beautiful evergreen, the yellow-jessamine, in full bloom, trailed along the wall of Dr. Hamilton's house." Anxious for his first sight of the Gulf of Mexico; he drove with Dr. Hamilton, the Presbyterian minister, to the light-house (situated on Choctaw Point and washed away by the storm of 1852), and, from the tower had a "splendid view of the city to the North, and to the South the noble bay of Mobile, fourteen miles across." He then went to the bay which lay "smooth and unruffled, the woods coming

down everywhere to its edge." He noted the immense amount of driftwood, dug up bivalve-shelled gnathodons that live in our mud-banks, and that will in future ages indicate the position of our rivers. He found Mobile to be built upon a deposit of these shells, the stratification of which proved that it had been thrown up by the waves. Our delta, in the soft mud of which cattle are frequently mired and which receives carcasses washed down by the rivers and thrown up by the sea, exemplifies the formation of such regions as the Fayûm of Egypt—the elephant's ancestral home—now covered by desert sands, but which is each day yielding priceless treasure to the paleontologist.

On February 23d, the *James L. Day*, bound for New Orleans, "sailed out of the beautiful bay of Mobile in the evening," carrying aboard Charles Lyell and his wife.

At the time of Lyell's visit, Alabama lay struggling in the grasp of that spirit of unrest which from the most remote antiquity as often obsessed people of the Aryan race, calling them ever westwards towards the setting sun. Everywhere he met

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 141

“movers”—Texas masking as the Promised Land, beckoning to the cultured as to the ignorant. Adventure prompted many, others knew not why they were going, some were “eaten out by their negroes,” and one informant said: “If we remain here, we are reduced to the alternative of high taxes to pay the interest of money so improvidently borrowed from England, or to suffer the disgrace of repudiation, which would be doubly shameful, because the money was received in hard cash, and lent out, often rashly by the State to farmers for agricultural improvements. Besides, all the expenses of the Government were in reality defrayed during several years by borrowed money and the burthen of the debt thrown on posterity. The facility with which your English capitalists, in 1821, lent their cash to a State from which the Indians were not yet expelled without reflecting on the migratory nature of the white population is astonishing. The planters, who got the grants of your money and spent it, have nearly all of them moved off and settled beyond the Mississippi.” But Lyell had faith in Alabama’s natural resources, which he felt were so great that only a moderate

142 Historic Sketches of the South

amount of economy would be necessary to surmount all embarrassments.

Texas and the probability of war with England over the Oregon Question were topics discussed on every hand. Lyell would hear the English adversely criticized and such boasts as "we have whipped them twice, and should whip them a third time," but where his nationality was known, he says, "never once were any speeches, uncourteous in their tone towards my country, uttered in my hearing."

On his geologizing trips, which would have oftentimes been hard on any one not riding his own hobby, he was forced to stop where night overtook him, so that even the habits of the "crackers" became familiar to him. "In many houses I hesitated to ask for water or towels, for fear of giving offense . . . nor could I venture to ask any one to rub a thick coat of mud off my trousers, lest I should be thought to reflect on members of the family, who had no idea of indulging in such luxuries themselves. I felt the want of a private bed-room, but very soon came to regard it as a privilege to be allowed even a bed to myself." In

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 143

his wanderings, he also met "clay-eaters"¹—a people curious in their cravings for certain kinds of clay. Their peculiar green complexion indicating anemia, which usually terminates in dropsy, was formerly considered a sequence to the gratification of this abnormal appetite, but is now supposed to be a result of a pathogenic parasite found in the small intestine.² The type is still a most familiar one in the hill-country just west of Mobile.

When dubious about safety from highwaymen, Lyell was assured that in the South this class was unknown; the working class being the slave class there was no poor made desperate by want. And that the Texas wars had relieved the different communities of their dare-devil spirits.

¹ There is very little literature about this class which is found in many parts of the world, and even that consists mostly of references to them by travelers and ethnologists. The fullest account with which I am familiar is an article by my uncle, the late Frank L. James, Ph.D., M.D., "The Geophagi, or Dirt Eaters," which appeared in the *National Druggist*, of March, 1900. Microscopic examinations made by him of the "dirt" used by our Alabama, Georgia, and Carolina geophagians showed it to be a ferruginous argilla about ten per cent. diatomaceous. The "dirt eaters" of the various countries do not eat any kind of clay, but uniformly affect an argillaceous substance, containing more or less infusorial matter.

² Since the first publication of this article, hookworm investigations and treatment have become common in all infected districts of the South.

144 Historic Sketches of the South

Lyell was often amused and astonished at the Southerner's loyal support of an ultra-Democratic notion of white equality, which in practice must have been thoroughly uncongenial to all classes concerned. He visited a lawyer at his country home—the family a cultivated one, used to the best society of a large city—but the host regarded it as an obligation to invite Lyell's driver, who was half Indian, to sit down to the table with them. Perhaps a consciousness that this boasted equality was more or less fictitious may have been responsible for the vindictive envy which flourished in the midst of this "aristocratic democracy." A jealousy so intense that a gentleman growing rich and settling in a quiet part of the country was apt to have his fences pulled down, cattle turned out to roam, and other indignities perpetrated. Many anecdotes of the genuineness and prevalence of this feeling were told to Lyell. The daughter of a member of the Legislature visited Mobile, had a dress made with flounces according to the latest fashion, and on her return home wore it to a ball. At the next election her father was defeated, and on asking a former supporter the

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 145

cause received the reply, "Do you think they would vote for you, after your daughter came to the ball in them fixings?"

Lyell found drunkenness very common, yet heard many speak of the great temperance reform, it being no longer considered an insult to refuse to drink with one's host. While he saw no cruelty to slaves, he felt that when drunkenness was so general among the owners their power might often be an abusive one. He states that it was not the object of his visit to study slavery, but his interesting observations would fill a chapter and are characterized by a keenness and fairness which make them very valuable. The stories told him by disgruntled and misinformed Northerners had prepared him for blood-curdling atrocities, but throughout Alabama he saw the negro in many phases: in his churches, about his pleasures, and at his occupations that ranged from farm-hand to mechanic; in the slave-market, as the indulged domestic, and as the faithful and cheerful follower of his master into new and unknown regions; and on no occasion had he reason to suspect maltreatment. When speaking to a

146 Historic Sketches of the South

Northern man of his favorable impressions, he was told that "great pains had been taken by the planters to conceal the true state of things"—that he had been "propitiated by hospitable attentions." Lyell found his own experience corroborated in a *Tradesman's Journal*, written by William Thompson, a Scotch weaver, who supported himself by his trade as he journeyed through the South.

After seeing what contact with the whites had done for the negro, Lyell entertained very sanguine hopes of the race's intellectual and moral possibilities, and was impatient of what seemed to him unjust laws which restricted the black educationally and politically. His two-sided attitude is a bit disarming, but is explained by himself. "We are often thrown into opposite states of mind and feeling, according as the interest of the white or negro happens, for the moment, to claim our sympathy." But the following words embody an unbiased and a beautiful tribute to the influence of the Southerners: "In spite of prejudice and fear, and in defiance of stringent laws enacted against education, three million of a more enlightened and

Impressions of Alabama in 1846 147

progressive race are brought into contact with an equal number of laborers lately in a savage state, and taken from a continent where the natives have proved themselves, for many thousand years, to be singularly unprogressive. Already their taskmasters have taught them to speak, with more or less accuracy, one of the noblest of languages, to shake off many old superstitions, to acquire higher ideals of morality, and habits of neatness and cleanliness, and have converted thousands of them to Christianity. Many they have emancipated, and the rest are gradually approaching to the condition of the ancient serfs of Europe half a century or more before their bondage died out.

“All this has been done at an enormous sacrifice of time and money; an expense, indeed, which all the Governments of Europe and all the Christian missionaries, whether Romanist or Protestant, could never have effected in five centuries. Even in the few States which I have already visited since I crossed the Potomac, several hundred thousand whites of all ages, among whom the

148 Historic Sketches of the South

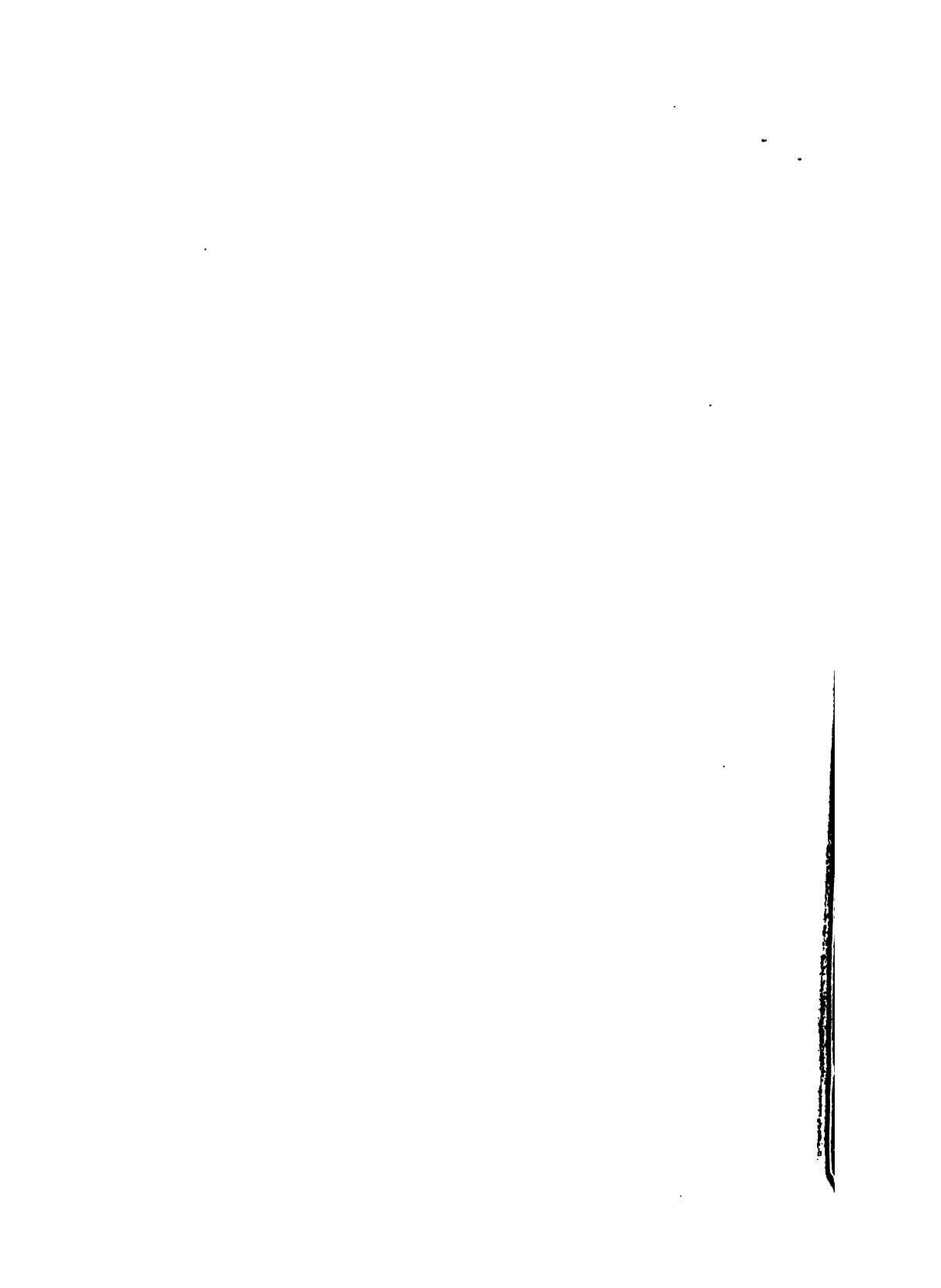
children are playing by no means the least effective part, are devoting themselves with greater or less activity to these involuntary educational exertions."

THE END

■







U

