CHAPTER
3

Myths and Realities of the New South

llowing Reconstruction a vision appeared of a new south invigorated by indus-y and economic progress. Advocates of the New South urged southerners to ange some of their traditional ways and imitate the victorious Yankees in hab-of thrift, labor, and industry. By this means the South could learn from its feat in the Civil War and strengthen itself for the future.

By 1900 notable changes had occurred. A southern textile industry had de-loped far beyond its antebellum roots, railroads had extended their lines roughout the region, and other industries were flourishing, such as tobacco anufacturing in Virginia and the Carolinas and iron and steel production in rmingham, Alabama. Small farmers throughout the South had entered the arket economy and were raising cash crops such as cotton and tobacco. Al-ough the role of merchants, manufacturers, and factory workers in the econ-ny remained small, it was growing.

What did advocates of the New South hope to accomplish? Who led this vement, and what were their motives? How much change occurred, and who d not benefit? Finally, how different was the New South from the Old? These e key questions that historians are asking as they assess the New South riod.

O C U M E N T S

vo of the foremost exponents of the New South vision were Atlanta newspaper itor Henry W. Grady and Carolinas industrialist Daniel Augustus Tompkins. th often spoke before northern audiences, boasting of the South's progress d defending its policies. The excerpts from their speeches and writings in the t two selections cover some of their major ideas and suggest the tone of New uth exhortations. The notion that enthusiasm for textile development grew into ublic-spirited, community movement was enshrined in the early historical itings of Broadus Michell; the third document, from his book *The Rise of Cot-ton Mills in the South*, describes the "cotton mill campaign." Hopes for industrial prosperity animated Warren C. Coleman, a black entrepreneur. In the fourth document, he calls on others of his race to support his plans for a cotton mill run by blacks. Not all comments on the New South were enthusiastic, however. When asked about their conditions by a North Carolina state agency, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, mill workers identified many areas of dissatisfaction, noted in the fifth selection. Finally, small farmers and farm laborers increasingly found themselves left out of any New South prosperity, as their comments to the North Carolina bureau plainly show in the last document.

Speeches by Henry W. Grady on the New South, 1886, 1889

From Speech Before Boston's Bay State Club, 1889

I attended a funeral once in Pickens county in my State. . . . This funeral was peculiarly sad. It was a poor "one gallus" fellow, whose breeches struck him under the armpits and hit him at the other end about the knee—he didn't believe in *decollete* clothes. They buried him in the midst of a marble quarry: they cut through solid marble to make his grave; and yet a little tombstone they put above him was from Vermont. They buried him in the heart of a pine forest, and yet the pine coffin was imported from Cincinnati. They buried him within touch of an iron mine, and yet the nails in his coffin and the iron in the shovel that dug his grave were imported from Pittsburg. They buried him by the side of the best sheep-grazing country on the earth, and yet the wool in the coffin bands and the coffin bands themselves were brought from the North. The South didn't furnish a thing on earth for that funeral but the corpse and the hole in the ground. There they put him away and the clods rattled down on his coffin, and they buried him in a New York coat and a Boston pair of shoes and a pair of breeches from Chicago and a shirt from Cincinnati, leaving him nothing to carry into the next world with him to remind him of the country in which he lived, and for which he fought for four years, but the chill of blood in his veins and the marrow in his bones.

Now we have improved on that. We have got the biggest marble-cutting establishment on earth within a hundred yards of that grave. We have got a half-dozen woolen mills right around it, and iron mines, and iron furnaces, and iron factories. We are coming to meet you. We are going to take a noble revenge, as my friend, Mr. Carnegie, said last night, by invading every inch of your territory with iron, as you invaded ours twenty-nine years ago.

From Grady's Speech, "The New South," Delivered to the New England Club in New York, 1886

We have established thrift in city and country. We have fallen in love with work. We have restored comfort to homes from which culture and elegance

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From Joel Chandler Harris, *Life of Henry W. Grady*, Cassell Publishing Company, 1890.

ever departed. We have let economy take root and spread among us as ank as the crabgrass which sprung from Sherman's cavalry camps, until e are ready to lay odds on the Georgia Yankee as he manufactures relics f the battlefield in a one-story shanty and squeezes pure olive oil out of s cotton seed, against any down-easter that ever swapped wooden nut-egs for flannel sausage in the valleys of Vermont. Above all, we know at we have achieved in these "piping times of peace" a fuller independ-nce for the South than that which our fathers sought to win in the forum y their eloquence or compel in the field by their swords.

It is a rare privilege, sir, to have had part, however humble, in this ork. Never was nobler duty confided to human hands than the uplifting nd upbuilding of the prostrate and bleeding South—misguided, perhaps, ut beautiful in her suffering, and honest, brave and generous always. In e record of her social, industrial and political illustration we await with nfidence the verdict of the world.

But what of the negro? Have we solved the problem he presents or ogressed in honor and equity toward solution? Let the record speak to e point. No section shows a more prosperous laboring population than e negroes of the South, none in fuller sympathy with the employing and nd-owning class. He shares our school fund, has the fullest protection of r laws and the friendship of our people. Self-interest, as well as honor, mand that he should have this. Our future, our very existence depend on our working out this problem in full and exact justice. We understand at when Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation, your victory was sured, for he then committed you to the cause of human liberty, against hich the arms of man cannot prevail—while those of our statesmen who sted to make slavery the corner-stone of the Confederacy doomed us defeat as far as they could, committing us to a cause that reason could t defend or the sword maintain in sight of advancing civilization.

Had Mr. Toombs said, which he did not say, "that he would call the ll of his slaves at the foot of Bunker Hill," he would have been foolish, he might have known that whenever slavery became entangled in war must perish, and that the chattel in human flesh ended forever in New gland when your fathers—not to be blamed for parting with what didn't y—sold their slaves to our fathers—not to be praised for knowing a ying thing when they saw it. The relations of the southern people with e negro are close and cordial. We remember with what fidelity for four ars he guarded our defenseless women and children, whose husbands d fathers were fighting against his freedom. To his eternal credit be it d that whenever he struck a blow for his own liberty he fought in open ttle, and when at last he raised his black and humble hands that the ackles might be struck off, those hands were innocent of wrong against helpless charges, and worthy to be taken in loving grasp by every man o honors loyalty and devotion. Ruffians have maltreated him, rascals ve misled him, philanthropists established a bank for him, but the South, h the North, protests against injustice to this simple and sincere people. liberty and enfranchisement is as far as law can carry the negro. The t must be left to conscience and common sense. It must be left to those among whom his lot is cast, with whom he is indissolubly connected, and whose prosperity depends upon their possessing his intelligent sympathy and confidence. Faith has been kept with him, in spite of calumnious assertions to the contrary by those who assume to speak for us or by frank opponents. Faith will be kept with him in the future, if the South holds her reason and integrity.

But have we kept faith with you? In the fullest sense, yes. When Lee surrendered—I don't say when Johnson surrendered, because I understand he still alludes to the time when he met General Sherman last as the time when he determined to abandon any further prosecution of the struggle—when Lee surrendered, I say, and Johnson quit, the South became, and has since been, loyal to this Union. We fought hard enough to know that we were whipped, and in perfect frankness accept as final the arbitrament of the sword to which we had appealed. The South found her jewel in the toad's head of defeat. The shackles that had held her in narrow limitations fell forever when the shackles of the negro slave were broken. Under the old régime the negroes were slaves to the South; the South was a slave to the system. The old plantation, with its simple police regulations and feudal habit, was the only type possible under slavery. Thus was gathered in the hands of a splendid and chivalric oligarchy the substance that should have been diffused among the people, as the rich blood, under certain artificial conditions, is gathered at the heart, filling that with affluent rapture but leaving the body chill and colorless.

The old South rested everything on slavery and agriculture, unconscious that these could neither give nor maintain healthy growth. The new South presents a perfect democracy, the oligarchs leading in the popular movement—a social system compact and closely knitted, less splendid on the surface, but stronger at the core—a hundred farms for every plantation, fifty homes for every palace—and a diversified industry that meets the complex need of this complex age.

The new South is enamored of her new work. Her soul is stirred with the breath of a new life. The light of a grander day is falling fair on her face. She is thrilling with the consciousness of growing power and prosperity. As she stands upright, full-statured and equal among the people of the earth, breathing the keen air and looking out upon the expanded horizon, she understands that her emancipation came because through the inscrutable wisdom of God her honest purpose was crossed, and her brave armies were beaten.

D. A. Tompkins on the New South, c. 1900

First Speech Excerpt

When I left South Carolina to go North, I thought I was leaving a country which had never had any important manufactures. Later, when I was in the middle of industrial life in the North, I conceived the idea of writing

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From George Taylor Winston, *a Builder of the New South*, Doubleday, Page & Company, 1920.

an industrial history of the United States. To my amazement I found that he agricultural South, from which I had come in a spirit of industrial despair, was the cradle of manufactures in the United States.

The industrial development of the South was as much advanced a hundred years ago as that of any other part of the Union. The census of 1810 shows that the manufactured products of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia exceeded in variety and value those of all the New England States taken together. There were more homespun cotton manufactures in Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia than in the thirteen other states and territories; more flax in Virginia than in any other state. Prior to 1812 Southern manufactures were in the line of household arts. These manufactures were generalized and dispersed, not localized and integrated; the aggregate was considerable.

In the Piedmont region of the Carolinas many charcoal blast furnaces were in operation a century ago. Cotton mills now operated by water power are on sites which were formerly occupied by Catlin forges, rolling mills, cotton factories, and other manufacturing plants. At these forges and rolling mills were made bars, nails, plowshares, and other products. One product was a special metal for rifle barrels. There were notable gunmakers in the Piedmont region in the time of these forges and rolling mills; and they required an extra good quality of metal for their rifles. These gun-makers supplied to the home people and to the frontiersmen of Tennessee and Kentucky most of the rifles which played such a part in frontier life, and were such a factor in the early development of American civilization. I have seen a copy of a contract in accordance with which the entire machinery equipment for a cotton mill was constructed in a machine shop at Lincolnton, N.C., in 1813.

When the Union was formed and a nation was organized, the order of the states in population and wealth was, Virginia first, Pennsylvania second, North Carolina third. In enterprise and development the South surpassed all other parts of the Union. The institution of slavery changed the relative position of North and South, the institution of slavery—not the negro—but the institution. The negro has never been in the way of industrial progress as much as the Indian was originally. But the institution of slavery had a tremendous adverse influence; and this would have been the same if the slaves had been white instead of colored.

The Southern States prospered before slavery became the dominant influence. The prosperity before that time was a prosperity of manufactures, commerce, and agriculture. As slavery grew in importance and influence, manufactures and commerce declined. The invention of the cotton gin emphasized the importance and profit of cotton culture with slave labor. The South became a country exclusively devoted to the production of staple crops: tobacco, rice, cotton, and sugar—all with slave labor. The free white mechanics were driven to the Northwest. My own grandfather owned and operated a carriage factory, which, for lack of white mechanics, he finally abandoned in favor of cotton production with negro slave labor.

Those who advocated slavery were interested in the extension of the system to the Southwest. The system founded upon agriculture with slave labor alone necessarily fell. From the time that slavery became the dominant influence the South made very little progress. From 1830 to 1860 South Carolina and North Carolina practically stood still; then wealth fell into the hands of fewer people, general development ceased, resources were neglected, migration was large and constant both to the central Northwest by white laborers and to the Southwest by slave owners with their slaves. As far as the character of the people and the resources of the country were concerned, the industrial progress of the Piedmont Carolinas should have been parallel with that of Pennsylvania.

Second Speech Excerpt

The South is in a state of change. A condition of civilization which grew upon the basis of the institution of slavery is dying and fading away. A condition of civilization based upon the new conditions imposed by the results of the late war has commenced to grow, and its growth is healthy and vigorous.

There are tenacious people of fine education who are living in the dying conditions of ante-bellum life, some by obstinate preference, some of necessity. These constitute the Old South. They are, as a rule, growing poorer day by day, and will continue to grow poorer, until the most tenacious of them pass out of life; and with them will go the system to which they persist in adhering.

The people who have adapted themselves to the new conditions imposed by the results of the Civil War constitute what we are beginning to hear called the New South. They have divorced from their minds the idea that for a Southern man there is no occupation but raising cotton with negro labor, and that free negro labor constitutes a curse to a country.

The New South finds within the South unlimited raw material from which products required by the whole world may be produced. The New South finds that the conditions which surround these vast resources in raw material are such that only energy and good judgment are required to produce many articles of commerce cheaper and better in the South than can be done in any other country in the world.

The New South is of healthy growth. It is already a young giant. It is absorbing the assets of the old, and adding to them at the same time by turning the raw material of the country, heretofore mostly untouched, into products from the sale of which come handsome profits.

In the Piedmont region of North and South Carolina cotton factories are springing up quietly but with a rapidity equalled nowhere in the United States in any industry, except by that of iron-making in Alabama and Tennessee.

While the opportunities of an iron maker in the South are excellent, it may admit of argument whether there are not many places in Pennsylvania or Ohio where they are as good, or better; but the superior advantages enjoyed by a cotton spinner operating in the South are conspicuous. Much cotton is now being spun in the South which comes direct from the field to a gin which is part of the equipment of the factory. This cotton is free from innumerable little losses to which cotton shipped to the New England

states, or abroad, is liable, in the way of sampling, cost of freight, damage by careless handling in the mud, and otherwise, at railway stations, etc. The profits of Southern mills are evidence of these advantages.

The only difficulty experienced so far in the development of the industry of cotton spinning in the South has been the lack of experience of proprietors and operatives. By the energy of enterprising men, this difficulty is being rapidly overcome. The late E. M. Holt, of Alamance County, N. C., was a pioneer. He was eminently successful in his efforts to operate machinery for spinning and weaving cotton. His sons seem to have inherited his energy and his enterprise, and each of them is largely interested in factories that have been established either by their father or themselves.

In the same county Messrs. Scott, Donnell & Scott have demonstrated that a small factory may be as successful as a large one if it is handled with the same care and judgment. The junior member of the firm, Mr. John Scott, has taken hold of the work of the factory in a manner and with a success that make him a worthy example to other young Southerners whose businesses furnish neither sufficient occupation nor profit to satisfy them. He is neither afraid to work nor to be seen working.

All along the Piedmont belt there are men who have attained to such success as entitles them to distinction. . . .

Atlanta is full of enterprises and enterprising men, and the growth of that city is a fair example of the results of Southern raw material and Southern labor combined. Here, too, the diversity of enterprise is marked. Here it is possible to contract for the products of cotton or cottonseed. Here are the headquarters of marble companies supplying marble as fine as the Italian stone. Granite is supplied for paving the streets of cities to the north and west. Here are manufactured cotton gins, steam engines, and various machines used in the preparation of cotton for the market. In Macon, J. F. Hanson is the successful manager of two splendidly equipped cotton factories; and at Columbus there are the Eagle and Phoenix Mills, than which none in Massachusetts has been more successful.

In Alabama, O. O. Nelson, of Montgomery, and George O. Baker, of Selma, have been foremost in the development of the new industry of crushing cottonseed for its products. And in connection with the growth of the iron interest the names of Doctor Caldwell of Birmingham, and A. H. Moses of Sheffield, are more than well known in connection with the growth of two cities and the marvellous multiplication of the original dollars invested by the corporations of which they are the heads. Both these gentlemen undertook the management of the affairs of the companies they now represent at a time when prospects did not look bright, and when the stock of the respective companies was not particularly marketable. Under their management the properties they control have increased in value more than any other properties in the United States have ever been known to do before. While these places stand conspicuous for their growth from almost nothing to marvellous wealth, other places have grown also, and other men in lesser degrees have done excellent work in Chattanooga, Anniston, South Pittsburg, etc., etc.

With all this improvement and marvellous progress how is it that we now and then see in a well-written public journal that the South is growing poorer? It is because the editor lives amongst people who have not yet consented to give up antebellum ways and ideas.

Third Speech Excerpt

The factories in North Carolina now manufacture about 300,000 bales of cotton into cloth and yarn a year. For this work there are employed in round numbers 30,000 operatives. This work is done with about one million spindles. It must be understood, of course, that I speak in figures that are even and somewhat approximate, but that are near enough the exact figures to illustrate this argument with reasonable accuracy.

In order to manufacture the entire cotton crop of the South into plain white and coarse colored goods there would be required something like 30,000,000 spindles and 1,000,000 operatives. The population of the Southern States may be reckoned at 20,000,000. Does anybody doubt that out of this 20,000,000 there is idle time enough wasted, even by those who would be willing to work, to furnish 1,000,000 good operatives in cotton factories? Go into any ordinary cotton market town where no cotton factories have as yet been built, and at any time from 7 A.M. to 10 P.M. count the people who are loafing, and the number found would more than make up the quota of people for its share of the workers necessary to manufacture the cotton crop. This loafing habit; this superabundance of people who are capable of working but who are loafing in the country and in towns where there are no factories, is conspicuous by comparison with the town where manufacturing enterprises have been established. By the same comparison the dilapidation of the houses is conspicuous; the poverty of the farmers in the adjacent country and the wretched condition of the roads are more than conspicuous.

Happily these old conditions are passing away. In many sections they have already passed away. The people of the South are naturally enterprising and resourceful. In the early days of the republic the south was the manufacturing end of the union. The first steamship ever to cross the ocean went out of Savannah. The South Carolina railway, when it was building, was the greatest engineering enterprise of the world. According to the United States census of 1810, the manufactured products of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, exceeded in value and variety those of the entire New England States. This is mentioned in no disparagement of New England but rather to show that our forefathers were men of enterprise and that they had confidence to venture on their own judgment. They never waited for somebody to come from somewhere and develop their resources for them. If they thought a cotton factory or a railroad would be a good thing they built it. The only mistake they made was in thinking that the colored brother as a slave was a good thing. The growth of slavery dried up a well-developed manufacturing tendency in the South.

Now slavery is gone, the last vestige of that anarchy that succeeded the Civil War is also now gone. Wherever the people have recovered

hours) is the only cause for complaint; the officers are kind and close attention to work and sobriety and morality is required of all who work here.

Employee—I work in the cotton mills. They employ men, women and children—many children who are too small to work, they should be at school; the parents are more to blame than are the mill-owners. The hands in the mills in this section are doing very well, and if they only received their pay weekly in cash instead of "trade checks," and store accounts they would not complain if they were paid in cash and were allowed to buy for cash where they pleased, it would be much better. Ten hours are enough for a day's work. I believe the mills here would be willing to it if there was a law making all conform to it. I believe compulsory education would be a benefit too.

Employee—This mill runs day and night. The day hands commence work at 6 o'clock in the morning and run tell 7 o'clock at night. They stop at 12 o'clock for dinner and ring the bell at 12:30 o'clock. I contend that the hands are in actual motion 13 hours per day. The trade check system is used here, and is not as good as cash, at this place nor any other place. If the hands trade their checks to any other firm, and they present them for cash, this firm demands a discount of 10 per cent. The best trade check used in this county is not worth over 75 per cent. Some of the checks used in this county are almost worthless. This long-hour system is destroying the health of all the young women who work in the mills. The employment of children in the mills at low wages keeps a great many men out of employment. Our Legislature should do something in regard the long-hour system and trade checks, and compel employers to pay cash for labor; then, you see, competition in trade would take place, and we could save some of our earnings, which would enable us to have night schools and improve our condition much in the way of education.

1889

Employee—There is room for big improvement for the good of operatives in cotton-mills. Twelve hours per day is too long to keep operatives at work, especially women and children. The check system ought to be stopped. A girl works for fifty cents per day, has three in family to support, gets a check each day for work, and buys her supplies from the company's store. When the four weeks are ended she has no checks and will get no cash. Just so long as they give checks and pay once a month, they will keep us on the grind-stone, and we cannot get justice or give it, in this condition. The day is coming when mill-owners will find out that if they give their hands good houses to live in, pay them cash, and teach them how to live and take care of their earned money, both parties will prosper and grow fat.

Employee—I work in a cotton-mill and am paid once a week in "trade checks," but the company I work for will cash them any time. I think that twelve hours a day is too long for any one to work in a mill. Nine hours is long enough for any one to work in the dust and lint of a factory. I think that the Legislature ought to pass a law making eight or nine hours a day's work in work-shops, mines and factories, and also a law to prevent the employment of children under fourteen years of age therein. The wages at the factories are about the same they were three years ago, but the cost of living has decreased about five per cent.

Tenants and Farmers Assess the New South, 1887–1889

Extracts from Letters to the Bureau on Various Subjects from Tenants and Farm Laborers in the Different Counties of the State

1887

A. R.—There is general depression and hard times and almost broken spirits among the tenant farmers. There are many things that contribute somewhat to this bad state of things but the one great cause is the outrageous per cent. charged for supplies bought on credit; it is sapping the life of North Carolina.

F. M. S.—The poor cannot clothe their children decently enough for a school room because of the exorbitant rate of interest they are charged for supplies; they are obliged to pay whatever the merchants charge. This is a most pressing evil and should be stopped by law or it will soon swallow us body and soul.

T. D. H.—Some think they pay only 25 or 30 per cent. for what they buy on crop liens, but if they will figure it out, they will see it is 100 to 200 per cent. per annum on the amount they buy over cash prices. There would be an over supply of labor if they would work. Negroes with some education will not work on the farm if they can help it. They have a keener desire for education than the whites and attend school much better.

W. J. M.—I think the present depressed condition of the farming interest is largely due to the mortgage system in buying supplies. There is no chance for improvement where this system is in operation.

J. M. B.—There is no man and no county that can long exist on 50 per cent. charged on everything eaten by farmers; unless a remedy is found the county will be ruined very soon.

O. E.—There ought to be a law passed forbidding any man planting more than ten acres in cotton to the horse.

J. S. M.—The condition of the farmers is bad and will get no better until we adopt some system and unite in our efforts to better ourselves and stop looking to others to help us; we must depend upon ourselves. When we become united we can get all the legislation we need; not till then.

J. L. H.—Merchants require a mortgage on whatever property tenant has, besides the crop. They are more strict this year than ever before. There were many that could not pay out last year. Tenants pay an advance of at least 25 per cent. on the average.

J. H. R.—The system of buying on time and using guano has broken
many farmers, and has driven so many to the towns to seek employment
at wages have been greatly reduced. If this state of things continues it
ill soon put all the land in the hands of a few men and ruin all classes.

F. W. R.—Attendance at school ought to be enforced by law; the
hools are now usually taught in winter when the child of the poor man
poorly clad and hence unable to attend; in summer they must work, and
they do not attend school. This should not be so—we must get out of
is condition or we shall go backward as a people and State.

S. A. H.—Many whites do not send their children to school for want
proper clothes. The people are in a bad condition and most of their lands
e mortgaged, in most cases too irredeemably. I see no hope for the county
get better unless the government comes to their help and lends them
oney at 1 per cent. to redeem their land and gives them twenty years to
y out. Wages have decreased on farms owing I believe to the tariff.

S. S.—We farmers work very hard, but get in no better condition.
idently there is something wrong. The towns flourish, while in the coun-
, where the producing element is, the people get worse off. We do not
nd the work—were raised to it—but would like to get something for it.

W. H. B.—The mortgage system is working its deadly way into this
unty, and making sad havoc where its tempting offers are once entered
o. Alas! one never gets out from its magic embrace until he dies out or
sold out. I wish this ruinous law could be repealed, and with it the
mestead law, which is the father of the mortgage system.

L. P.—The trouble in this county is the awful time prices that we have
pay the merchants, not less than 50 per cent. The price of labor is low
d it should be higher, but the farmer can't afford to pay even present
ices, because the high per cent. keeps him down. The homestead law
ould be repealed and then the lien law and the high time prices would
ve to go.

P. H. H.—The poor tenant and farm laborers and in many cases land-
ners, are in a bad condition, mostly on account of the heavy per cent.
arged by merchants for supplies.

J. E. D.—Labor is down; so is the farmer. The merchant is the pros-
rous man now. Half of the farms are mortgaged to the commission mer-
ants, who charge 50 per cent. above cash prices. Half of the farmers of
s county are bound to merchants by the mortgage system.

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marks.—In my opinion, the greatest evil with the farmers here is, that
land-owners will rent their lands and hire their teams to tenants, and
nish provisions; the consequence is, the tenant gets so far in debt to the
dlord that, before the crop is laid by, the tenant gets dissatisfied and
s to work the crop as it ought to be, and, therefore, raises bad crops
the land is left in bad condition. If the landlord would hire the labor,
land would be in better condition and labor would be better also.

Remarks.—The year in this section was not favorable to farming. Spring late. The heavy rain-fall in June and July injured the general crop badly, particularly cotton. The sweet-potato crop not good—too much rain. Had a killing frost on the nights of October 5 and 6, which did considerable damage.

Remarks.—I will name a few evils the farmer has to contend with, viz: The price of everything produced by the farmer is fixed by the merchant, or purchaser, as well as everything bought by the farmer, and high rates for transportation on railroads. The first evil mentioned can be overcome by the farmers paying cash for what they purchase, and cooperation. The second should be overcome by proper legislation—a Railroad Commission Bill.

Remarks.—The mortgage system, with the consequent high prices exacted for supplies, and the one-crop (cotton) system hangs like an incubus about this people and have well-nigh ruined them financially. The system of working the public roads now in vogue with us is very unsatisfactory with us, not to say unjust. Capital or property and labor should both be taxed to keep up the public highways. My idea would be to value an able-bodied man, with nothing but his head, say at $500 or $1,000 each, as the exigencies of the case might demand, and then require every $500 or $1,000 worth of capital or property to contribute a like amount, either in labor or its equivalent in money. I have given this matter much thought and this strikes me as the most equitable and feasible plan. Our public school system in this part of the State is very inefficient.

Remarks.—Time was in this vicinity nearly every farmer not only supported himself and family from the products of the farm, but had something to spare as well. That time has passed away, I fear, forever. Then very little cotton was raised, and the farmers looked well to grain crops, horses, cattle, hogs and sheep. There was not much opulence, but much of substantial independence. Now, instead of being a year before, they are a year, at least behind, and, toil as they may, too many of them at the close of the year, when the books are opened, find the balance-sheet against them, "though every nerve was strained." The mortgage system, which hangs like a pall of death over many an honest, hard-working man, will ruin any business interest in this country. No farmer can borrow money, or buy on crop-time, at an advance of from thirty to fifty per cent. No farmer can farm successfully without some money; the present rates offered him amounts to prohibition. I cannot, in the brief space allowed, recount many of the ills now affecting us, or make any suggestion in palliation of them. To be brief, farmers are very much dispirited at the outlook, while they have worked harder for the last two years than at any time within my knowledge.

⚓ *E S S A Y S*

C. Vann Woodward, a history professor emeritus from Yale University, began the scholarly reevaluation of this period with his impressive book *Origins of the New South*. In the first selection, Woodward examines the growth of textiles, the New South's leading industry, and comments provocatively about the

CHAPTER
4

Land and Labor in the New South

The future of the New South was not to be determined by industry alone. As the mounting protests of farmers made clear, the region's progress depended heavily on developments in agriculture, that sector of the economy in which most people—whites and blacks—worked. After Reconstruction it became increasingly clear that a distinctive system of labor—one based on sharecropping and the crop lien—had arisen in southern agriculture and that the results were tragically disappointing both for many workers and for the South as a whole.

All scholars agree that one fundamental, underlying reason for poor returns in agriculture was a worldwide decline in cotton prices. Demand was growing much more slowly than between 1800 and 1860, and the South's booming production led only to depressed prices. Then why did the South maintain its heavy reliance on cotton? The answer lies in the sharecropping and furnishing systems, which locked farmers and farm workers into the production of a crop whose price was falling.

What was sharecropping, and how did it develop? What role did merchants, landowners, and laborers—black and white—play in the sharecropping system? How did race affect it? Did it benefit sharecroppers or lead to abuses of them? Historians and economists have scrutinized these questions as part of their pursuit of larger issues: How did sharecropping affect the South's overall economic system? How did the region's economy differ from the North's economy? Why did the South become so poor and backward?

DOCUMENTS

The first document is a contract executed in January 1886 between a sharecropper and a landowner in North Carolina; it is typical of innumerable contracts made in the South in the last decades of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. The second document is an agricultural lien, or "crop lien," which gave assurance to the landowner that his expenses in "furnishing" the cropper with food and supplies during 1876 would be repaid. The crop lien customarily accompanied any sharecropping agreement. (This document also pledged the cropper's real and personal property, if necessary, to repay the man who furnished him.) In the third document, Nate Shaw, a black sharecropper, describes some of his experiences with the sharecropping system. His account reveals both the workings of the system and its special dangers for a black man, due to pervasive racism. The last document provides a differing but not entirely incompatible view of sharecropping by William Alexander Percy, a white man who in the 1930s became the head of a large landowning family in Mississippi.

A Sharecropping Contract, 1886

This contract made and entered into between A. T. Mial of one part and Fenner Powell of the other part both of the County of Wake and State of North Carolina—

Witnesseth—That the Said Fenner Powell hath barganed and agreed with the Said Mial to work as a cropper for the year 1886 on Said Mial's land on the land now occupied by Said Powell on the west Side of Poplar Creek and a point on the east Side of Said Creek and both South and North of the Mial road, leading to Raleigh, That the Said Fenner Powell agrees to work faithfully and dilligently without any unnecessary loss of time, to do all manner of work on Said farm as may be directed by Said Mial, And to be respectful in manners and deportment to Said Mial. And the Said Mial agrees on his part to furnish mule and feed for the same and all plantation tools and Seed to plant the crop free of charge, and to give the Said Powell One half of all crops raised and housed by Said Powell on Said land except the cotton seed. The Said Mial agrees to advance as provisions to Said Powell fifty pound of bacon and two sacks of meal pr month and occationally Some flour to be paid out of his the Said Powell's part of the crop or from any other advance that may be made to Said Powell by Said Mial. As witness our hands and seals this the 16th day of January A.D. 1886

Witness — *A. T. Mial* [signed] [Seal]

W. S. Mial [signed] — *Fenner* X *Powell* (*his mark*) [Seal]

A Crop Lien, 1876*

No. 123.—Lien Bond secured by Real and Personal Property.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA,

Wake County.

Articles of Agreement, Between *Alonzo T. Mial* of said County and State, of the first part, and *A. Robert Medlin* of the County and State aforesaid,

* A lien bond between A. Robert Medlin and Alonzo T. Mial; 1876. All italicized words were handwritten in the original. (*Source:* Alonzo T. and Millard Mial Papers, North Carolina Department of Archives and History.)

of the second part, to secure an Agricultural Lien according to an Act of General Assembly of North Carolina, entitled "An Act to secure advances for Agricultural purposes":

Whereas, the said *A. R. Medlin* being engaged in the cultivation of the soil, and being without the necessary means to cultivate his crop, *The Said A. T. Mial* ~~have~~ has agreed to furnish goods and supplies to the said *A. R. Medlin* to an amount not to exceed *One Hundred and fifty* Dollars, to enable him to cultivate and harvest his crops for the year 1876.

And in consideration thereof, the said *A. R. Medlin* doth hereby give and convey to the said *A. T. Mial* a LIEN upon all of his crops grown in said County in said year, on the lands described as follows: *The land of A. R. Medlin adjoining the lands of Nelson D. Pain Samuel Bunch & others.*

And further, in Consideration thereof, the said *A. R. Medlin* for One Dollar in hand paid, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, have bargained and sold, and by these presents do bargain, sell and convey unto the said *A. T. Mial his* heirs and assigns forever, the following described Real and Personal Property to-wit: *All of his Stock horses, Cattle Sheep and Hogs—Carts and Wagons House hold and kitchen furnishings.* To Have and to Hold the above described premises, together with the appurtenances thereof, and the above described personal property, to the said *A. T. Mial his* heirs and assigns.

The above to be null and void should the amount found to be due on account of said advancements be discharged on or before the *1st* day of *November* 1876: otherwise the said *A. T. Mial his* executors, administrators or assigns, are hereby authorized and empowered to seize the crops and Personal Property aforesaid, and sell the same, together with the above Real Estate, for cash, after first advertising the same for fifteen days, and the proceeds thereof apply to the discharge of this Lein, together with the cost and expenses of making such sale, and the surplus to be paid to the said *A. R. Medlin*, or his legal representatives.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said parties have hereunto set their hands and seals this *29th* day of *February*, 1876.

his

A. Robert X Medlin , [seal]
mark

Witness: *L. D. Goodloe* [signed]

A. T. Mial [signed], [seal]

Nate Shaw's Story (c. 1910), 1971

I didn't make two good bales of cotton the first year I stayed with Mr. Curtis. Sorry land, scarce fertilizer, Mr. Curtis not puttin out, riskin much on me and I a workin little old fool, too. I knowed how to plow—catch the mule out the lot, white man's mule, bridle him, go out there and set my plow the way I wanted—I knowed how to do it. Bout a bale and a half was what I made.

The second year he went out there and rented some piney wood land from Mr. Lemuel Tucker, sixteen acres bout a half mile from his plantation and he put me on it. Well, it was kind of thin but it was a king over Mr. Curtis's land. I worked it all in cotton; what little corn I had I planted on Mr. Curtis's place. Well, I made six pretty good bales of cotton out there for Mr. Curtis and myself. When I got done gatherin, wound up, by havin to buy a little stuff from Mr. Curtis at the start, in 1907—it sort of pulled the blinds over my eyes. It took all them six bales of cotton to pay Mr. Curtis. In the place of prosperin I was on a standstill. Second year I was married it took all I made on Mr. Tucker's place, by Mr. Curtis havin rented it from Mr. Tucker for me, to pay up 1908's debts and also 1907's debts—as I say, by me buyin a right smart to start me off to housekeepin, cleaned me. I had not a dollar left out of the cotton. And also, Mr. Curtis come in just before I moved off his place—I was determined to pay him and leave him straight; in fact, I reckon I just had to do it because he'd a requested it of me, movin from his place, clean up and leave myself clear of him.

Mr. Curtis had Mr. Buck Thompson to furnish me groceries. Mr. Curtis knowed all of what Mr. Thompson was lettin me have; kept a book on me. See, he was standin for everything Mr. Thompson gived me; he paid Mr. Thompson and I paid him—the deal worked that way—out of my crop. So he made somethin off my grocery bill besides gettin half my crop when the time come.

Took part of my corn to pay him. He come to my crib, him and Mr. Calvin Culpepper come together to my crib and got my corn, so much of it. And what I had he got the best of it, to finish payin him on top of them six bales of cotton.

Then I moved to Mr. Gus Ames', 1908. Mr. Ames' land was a little better than Mr. Curtis's, but it was poor. Worked his pet land hisself and whatever he made off me, why, that was a bounty for him. I didn't make enough there to help me.

Hannah was dissatisfied at it, too. We talked it over and our talk was this: we knew that we weren't accumulatin nothin, but the farmin affairs was my business, I had to stand up to em as a man. And she didn't worry me bout how we was doin—she knowed it weren't my fault. We was just both dissatisfied. So, we taken it under consideration and went on and she was stickin right with me. She didn't work my heart out in the deal. I wanted to work in a way to please her and satisfy her. She had a book learnin, she was checkin with me at every stand. She was valuable to me and I knowed it. And I was eager to get in a position where I could take care of her and our children better than my daddy taken care of his wives and children.

Mr. Curtis and Mr. Ames both, they'd show me my land I had to work and furnish me—far as fertilize to work that crop, they'd furnish me what

they wanted to; didn't leave it up to me. That's what hurt—they'd furnish me the amount of fertilize they wanted regardless to what I wanted. I quickly seed, startin off with Mr. Curtis in 1907, it weren't goin to be enough. First year I worked for him and the last year too he didn't allow me to use over twenty-two hundred pounds of guano—it come in two-hundred-pound sacks then—that's all he'd back me up for all the land I worked, cotton and corn. It was enough to start with but not enough to do any more. Really, I oughta been usin twice that amount. Told him, too, but he said, "Well, at the present time and system, Nate, you can't risk too much."

I knowed I oughta used more fertilize to make a better crop—if you puts nothin in you gets nothin, all the way through. It's nonsense what they gived me—Mr. Curtis and Mr. Ames, too—but I was a poor colored man, young man too, and I had to go by their orders. It wasn't that I was ignorant of what I had to do, just, "Can't take too much risk, can't take too much risk." Now if you got anything that's profitable to you and you want to keep it and prosper with that thing, whatever it is, however you look for your profit—say it's a animal; you're due to look for your profit by treatin him right, givin him plenty to eat so he'll grow and look like somethin. Or if you fertilize your crop right, if you go out there and work a row of cotton—that's evidence of proof—I have, in my farmin, missed fertilizen a row and it stayed under, too. Them other rows growed up over it and produced more. If you don't put down the fertilize that crop aint goin to prosper. But you had to do what the white man said, livin here in this country. And if you made enough to pay him, that was all he cared for; just make enough to pay him what you owed him and anything he made over that, why, he was collectin on his risk. In my condition, and the way I see it for everybody, if you don't make enough to have some left you aint done nothin, except givin the other fellow your labor. That crop out there goin to prosper enough for him to get his and get what I owe him; he's makin his profit but he aint goin to let me rise. If he'd treat me right and treat my crop right, I'd make more and he'd get more—and a heap of times he'd get it all! That white man gettin all he lookin for, all he put out in the spring, gettin it all back in the fall. But what am I gettin for my labor? I aint gettin nothin. I learnt that right quick: it's easy to understand if a man will look at it. . . .

Now it's right for me to pay you for usin what's yours—your land, tock, plow tools, fertilize. But how much should I pay? The answer ought o be closely seeked. How much is a man due to pay out? Half his crop? A third part of his crop? And how much is he due to keep for hisself? You ot a right to your part—rent; and I got a right to mine. But who's the an ought to decide how much? The one that owns the property or the ne that works it? . . .

If you want to sell your cotton at once, you take it to the market, carry to the Apafalya cotton market and they'll sample it. Cotton buyin man uts a slug in the side of your bale, reaches in there and pulls the first of it out the way and get him a handful, just clawin in there. He'll look over that sample, grade that cotton—that's his job. What kind of grade do it make? You don't know until he tells you. If it's short staple, the devil, your price is cut on that cotton. Color matters too, and the way it was ginned—some gins cuts up the cotton, ruins the staple.

They had names for the cotton grades—grade this, or grade that or grade the other. Didn't do no good to argue with the man if you didn't agree with the grade. Thing for you to do if he graded your cotton, examined it and gived you a low bid, take it to the next man.

Much of it is a humbug just like everything else, this gradin business. Some of em don't pay you what that cotton's worth a pound. They want long staple, clean cotton: the cleaner and the prettier it is and the nearer it comes to the specification of the staple they lookin for, the more they'll offer you. Generally, it's a top limit to that price and that's what they call the price cotton is bringin that year. If it's forty-cent cotton or six-cent cotton, it don't depend much on *your* cotton. It's a market price and it's set before you ever try to sell your cotton, and it's set probably before you gin your cotton and before you gather it or grow it or even plant your seed.

You take that cotton and carry it around to the cotton buyers. You might walk in that market buildin to a certain cotton buyer and he'll take your sample and look it over, look it over, give it a pull or two and he just might if he's very anxious for cotton, offer you a good price for it. But if he's in no hurry to buy your cotton and he gives you a price you don't like you can go to another buyer.

Heap of em buyin that cotton to speculate; he got plenty of money, wants to make more money, he buyin that cotton for himself and he don't care what company buys it from him. Maybe he might be buyin for a speculatin company, a company what does business in speculation. Or he might be buyin for a company that uses that cotton. Or if he can handle the matter, he buys for two companies.

Niggers' cotton didn't class like a white man's cotton with a heap of em. Used to be, when I was dealin with them folks in Apafalya, some of em you could have called em crooks if you wanted to; they acted in a way to bear that name, definitely. Give a white man more for his cotton than they do you.

I've had white men to meet me on the streets with a cotton sample in my hand, say, "Hello, Nate, you sellin cotton today?" White men, farmers like myself, private men; some of em was poor white men.

I'd tell em, "Yes, sir, I'm tryin. I can't look like get what my cotton's worth."

"What you been offered?"

"Well, Mr. So-and-so—"

"O, I see here such-and-such a one offered you so-and-so-and-so—"

Heap of times the scaper that I offered to sell him my cotton had a knack of puttin his bid on the paper that the cotton was wrapped up in. I

didn't want him to do that. The next man would see how much this one bid me and he wouldn't go above it.

And so, I'd have my cotton weighed and I'd go up and down the street with my sample. Meet a white man, farmin man like myself, on the street; he'd see what I been offered for my sample—the buyer's marks would be on the wrapper—or I'd tell him. And he'd take that sample, unwrap it, look at it; he'd say, "Nate, I can beat you with your own cotton, I can get more for it than that."

Aint that enough to put your boots on! The same sample. He'd say, "Let me take your sample and go around in your place. I can beat what they offered you."

Take that cotton and go right to the man that had his bid on it and he'd raise it; right behind where I was, had been, and get a better bid on it. I've gived a white man my sample right there on the streets of Apafalya; he'd go off and come back. Sometime he'd say, "Well, Nate, I helped you a little on it but I couldn't help you much."

And sometime he'd get a good raise on it with another fellow out yonder. He'd bring my sample back to me with a bid on it. "Well, Nate, I knowed I could help you on that cotton."

That was happenin all through my farmin years: from the time I stayed on the Curtis place, and when I moved to the Ames place and when I lived with Mr. Reeve, and when I moved down on Sitimachas Creek with Mr. Tucker, and when I lived up there at Two Forks on the Stark place, and when I moved down on the Pollard place and stayed there nine years. Colored man's cotton weren't worth as much as a white man's cotton less'n it come to the buyer in the white man's hands. But the colored man's labor—that was worth more to the white man than the labor of his own color because it cost him less and he got just as much for his money. . . .

I come up to my house one day—I was out checkin on my fences—and my wife told me there was a card in the mailbox tellin me to come to the bank in Apafalya and sign papers on my place. I said, "If I go, any way I go, you goin with me." See, she had book learnin and she could read and write. So I told her, "Well, we'll go to Apafalya this evenin, right after dark."

She was right down with me. Sometimes she'd say, "Darlin, you know what's best to do. But you can't decide *what* to do until you knows every side of the proposition. And bein that you can't read and write, it's profitable for us all for you to make me your partner."

I told her, one day, and many a time, "I'm married to you. And I think my best business should be in your hands. If anybody knows the ins and outs of it, you the one to know. But so far as workin in the field, I aint never had a high opinion of that and I intend to always be that way. Your business is at the house, mine's out in the field."

She was a girl that her mother would put all her business in her hands—her mother couldn't read and write. You could drop any sort of paper in front of Hannah and she could pick it up and read it like a top. She was pretty far advanced in education. She wasn't a graduate but she understood anything and could talk it off, too. She was, in a way of speakin, the *eyes* and I was the mouthpiece.

So, when I went there to sign them papers, I told her, "You goin with me."

I wanted her to read them papers to me; I knowed they weren't goin to do it. All I had to do was sign, but I wanted to know what I was signin.

Watson had taken over the place from the federal government and it was him I had to sign with. My wife and I jumped in the car and went right on to Apafalya. Got there and walked in—weren't nobody there in the bank but Mr. Grace and Mr. Watson. O good God, the doors flew right open and I broke out; I couldn't help it, I got red hot. I was signin—called it signin papers on that place. I knowed what I was signin before I signed; that's what brought the devil up.

"Hi, hello, Nate."

"Hello, Nate."

"How do you do, Mr. Watson, Mr. Grace."

Said, "Well, you come here to sign your papers, didn't you?"

I said, "Yes sirs, that's why I'm here."

Pushed it through the window for me to sign. My wife was standin right there and I just handed it to her. That's when I found out the devil was in the concern; that kept crossin my mind all the time and that kept me, to a great extent, from signin any notes at all with Watson.

Hannah turned away, stepped off a step or two, whipped that paper right over in a jiffy. She come back with it and touched me on my arm. I listened to her. She said, "Darlin, that paper covers everything you got: your mules, wagon, all your tools and your cows and hogs and everything you got's on that paper."

Good God, when she told me that I hollered. I just pushed the paper back to em through the bars. I said, "I won't sign that paper, noway under the sun it could be fixed like it is."

I'd expected to come there that night and sign papers on the land—Watson knowed what I had—not reach out and take my mules, my wagon, my hogs, my cows, on that paper. And if I'd a signed it like they was preparin me to do, I could have lost it all. Just be late payin on the land and they would take everything I had. I had sense enough through my wife to see what they was tryin to do to me. Wooooooooo, I meant to buck it.

I said, "Aint that land sufficient to stand for itself and not none of my personal property on it? I can't carry it nowhere."

Tried to saddle everything I had. Right there I burst like a butterbean in the sun. I wouldn't sign that note for Jesus Christ. I just stuck that paper back through them bars—I knowed the type of him. I felt a fire in my heart; told my wife, "Let's go."

If I couldn't do better I was goin to move away from there. Soon as I told my wife, "Let's go," and got nearly to the door, "Come back, come back, Nate, we can change the paper; come back, come back, we can change it."

I just say now I was a fool—I went back. They changed that paper to

suit me and I signed it. It just spoke for the land then. So I signed to buy the place from Mr. Watson and if I couldn't make the payments all they could do was take it back. . . .

And I killed all the meat we could use until I killed meat again—from winter to winter. I had a white man walk through my yard—two of em, Mr. Albert Clay and Mr. Craven. I don't know Mr. Craven's given name but that was Mr. Clay's brother-in-law. Come through my yard one Saturday evenin and I had killed three big hogs, me and my little boys, and had em stretched out over the yard after I cut em up.

They walked up to my back yard on the north side of the house—that old house I was livin in was built east and west—and they come up from towards my barn. I was surprised in a way but I didn't let it worry me, people go where they want to and walk anywhere they want to. Mr. Albert Clay and Mr. Craven come up from towards my barn. My barn set west of the house and back behind the barn was my pasture. Well, they come right up cross the back yard—that yard was covered with meat from three big hogs I'd just killed and had the meat put out; it was all of nine hundred pounds of meat. They looked there in that yard and stools, boxes, tables, benches, and everything had planks across em and them planks was lined with meat, just killed and cut out. Dressed, gutted, and cut open but not fully cut up, layin out, ready for salt.

Mr. Craven made a big moderation. "Where'd you get all this meat, Shaw? What are you goin to do with all this meat?"

It was all over the yard, coverin everything in sight. Three great big hogs weighed over three hundred pounds apiece. Had more meat there than you could shake a stick at.

"That's more meat than ever I seed any nigger—" that's the way he said it—"I aint never seed that much meat that no one nigger owned it."

They looked hard, didn't stop lookin. After a while they crept on out of there, still stretchin their eyes at that meat. They didn't like to see a nigger with too much; they didn't like it one bit.

William Alexander Percy Views Sharecropping, 1941

I have no love of the land and few, if any, pioneer virtues, but when Trail Lake became mine after Father's death, I must confess I was proud of it. I could reach it in three quarters of an hour. It was a model place: well drained, crossed by concrete roads, with good screened houses, a modern gin, artesian-well water, a high state of cultivation, a Negro school, a foolish number of churches, abundant crops, gardens and peach trees, quantities of hogs, chickens, and cows, and all the mules and tractors and equipment any place that size needed.

Father had operated it under the same contract that Fafar used on the Percy Place. The Negroes seemed to like it and I certainly did. I happen to believe that profit-sharing is the most moral system under which human beings can work together and I am convinced that if it were accepted in principle by capital and labor, our industrial troubles would largely cease. So on Trail Lake I continue to be partners with the sons of ex-slaves and to share fifty-fifty with them as my grandfather and Father had done.

In 1936 a young man with a passion for facts roved in from the University of North Carolina and asked to be allowed to inspect Trail Lake for the summer. He was Mr. Raymond McClinton, one of Doctor Odum's boys, and the result of his sojourn was a thesis entitled "A Social-Economic Analysis of a Mississippi Delta Plantation." That's coming pretty stout if you spend much of your time trying to forget facts and are stone-deaf to statistics. But some of his findings were of interest even to me, largely I suspect because they illustrated how Fafar's partnership-contract works in the modern world. In 1936, the year Mr. McClinton chose for his study, the crop was fair, the price average (about twelve cents), and the taxes higher than usual. Now for some of his facts:

Trail Lake has a net acreage of 3,343.12 acres of which 1,833.66 are planted in cotton, 50.59 are given to pasture, 52.44 to gardens, and the rest to corn and hay. The place is worked by 149 families of Negroes (589 individuals) and in 1936 yielded 1,542 bales of cotton. One hundred and twenty-four of the families work under Fafar's old contract, and twenty-five, who own their stock and equipment, under a similar contract which differs from the other only in giving three-fourths instead of one-half of the yield to the tenant. The plantation paid in taxes of all kinds $20,459.99, a bit better than $6.00 per acre; in payrolls for plantation work $12,584.66—nearly $4.00 an acre. These payrolls went to the Negroes on the place. The 124 families without stock of their own made a gross average income of $491.90 and a net average income of $437.64. I have lost Mr. McClinton's calculation of how many days of work a plantation worker puts in per year, but my own calculation is a maximum of 150 days. There is nothing to do from ginning time, about October the first, to planting time, about March the fifteenth, and nothing to do on rainy days, of which we have many.

These figures, as I read them, show that during an average year the 124 families working on Trail Lake for 150 days make each $437.64 clear, besides having free water and fuel, free garden plot and pasturage, a monthly credit for six months to cover food and clothing, a credit for doctor's bills and medicine, and a house to live in. The Negroes who receive this cash and these benefits are simple unskilled laborers. I wonder what other unskilled labor for so little receives so much. Plantations do not close down during the year and there's no firing, because partners can't fire one another. Our plantation system seems to me to offer as humane, just, self-respecting, and cheerful a method of earning a living as human beings are likely to