

it is a phenomenon that can be explained only through a broad analysis of the entire political, economic, and social structure of the period.

New York

OTTO NATHAN

Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836-1846: As Reflected in the Diary of Bennet Hilliard Barrow. Edited by Edwin Adams Davis. [Studies in the History of American Agriculture, No. 9.] New York: Columbia University Press, 1943. Pp. xvi, 457. \$5.00.

The historian always welcomes the publication of ante-bellum plantation records. They, of course, provide new source material but they do more. They help to emphasize one of the most important facts in the history of the American South, namely, that no two plantations were alike in life or labor or any other essential detail. Like most rural worlds they varied from region to region, from time to time, and from owner to owner. Each new plantation record makes generalizations more difficult.

The plantation diary of Bennet H. Barrow, resident of west Feliciana Parish in Louisiana, is "typical" in this respect. His parish was one of the most fruitful in a locality of unusual fertility. He and his ancestors built the estate by the progressive purchase of neighboring lands and thereby fell into the usual planter state of indebtedness, a state augmented by endorsing the notes of "untrustworthy" friends. They tried different crops but usually fell back on cotton; they bought slaves and built a "big" house; they raced their horses and went down to New Orleans on occasion to break the monotony of country life. But here "the usual" ends and the "individual" begins. For day in and out, events and life on this plantation were those of a peculiar set of persons and relationships. Each day brought its own problems, work according to season and circumstance, personal conflicts and co-operations, accidents and sicknesses, adventures and incidents. They were never quite the same. They varied with personalities and circumstances. All put together they made up a little world, much like those round about, but, nevertheless, different in detail.

The things that stand out are the importance first and always of weather and health. There was a greater use of machinery here than in the older regions. The profits, when there were profits, were correspondingly larger. Slave-master relationships were unusually good but any close reading of the diary shows that the relationship was personal and varied from negro to negro. Even the matters of punishment and reward carried the stamp of the individual master and the individual slave. Of "Old Orange," Barrow wrote: "A more perfect negro never lived, faithful honest & purely religious, never knew him guilty of a wrong." Dorcas and Fanny were "the greatest shirks" and Dennis and Lewis were "rascals of the first water."

Mr. Davis has done a fine job of editing. His introductions are comprehensive and well written. The inclusion of an inventory of Barrow's estate, a list of his slaves, his accounts for certain years, and the record of his cotton sales adds greatly to the value of the book.

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AVERY CRAVEN

RECENT TEXTS

The Growth of the American Economy: An Introduction to the Economic History of the United States. Edited by Harold F. Williamson. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1944. Pp. xiii, 804. \$4.00.

An editor and twenty-six authors present an introduction to the economic history of the United States in thirty-two chapters. The first sixteen relate to the period before the Civil War, the last to that period since the war. The plan seems to be to devote one or more essays to the topic in its pre-Civil War aspects, then in the latter half of the book to pick it up again