

The William J. Minor Plantations: A Study In Ante-Bellum Absentee Ownership

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In 1860 the sugar region of Louisiana stretched from the Red River southward encompassing mainly that area lying between Bayou Vermilion and the Mississippi River and extending almost to the Gulf. Its rich soil made it a chosen spot for the agriculturist, and its lazy bayous and inland lakes with the lush vegetation and varied wild life of its semitropical climate marked it as a land of enchantment.

In the decade of the 1850's the region was at the height of its antebellum development. Along the Mississippi and Bayou Lafourche were to be found the large plantations and their impressive homes. West of the river in the Teche region was the newer sugar area. More recently settled and developed, it was still a land of numerous small cane farmers. But here too by the 1850's the large plantation had made its appearance.

Many of the early sugar planters of Louisiana were of Creole French and Spanish descent, but in the early decades of the nineteenth century the tide of Anglo-American migration swept irresistibly over the state. This was the frontier of the South—it was an El Dorado—it was opportunity. Rich and poor, slaveholder and nonslaveholder, large planter and small farmer—from other parts of the South, from the Northeast, and from the upper Mississippi Valley they poured into this rapidly developing region. But not all gave up their homes elsewhere to go pioneering in this reputedly “sickly” lowland of the South. Some, already possessors of wealth, name, and influence in older communities,

reluctant to leave all this, acquired and operated sugar plantations as absentee holdings from which they hoped to derive profits. Such an absentee holder was William J. Minor of Natchez, Mississippi. By 1860, Minor was in possession of three sugar plantations in Louisiana—Waterloo, a 1,900 acre holding on the Mississippi in Ascension Parish, and Southdown and Hollywood, of 6,000 and 1,400 acres, respectively, in Terrebonne Parish.¹

Minor's background illustrates that of the better type of southern planter. Son of Stephen Minor, early governor of the Natchez district while it was still under Spanish control, his early life was spent at "Concord," the residence of the early Spanish governors near Natchez and afterwards the Minor family home. In the 1820's he was sent to Philadelphia, where he studied Latin, French, and English with a companion tutor and attended lectures in chemistry and philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania. He had already acquired a love for books and had read in the many volumes on geography, travel, and poetry in his father's library.

He returned to Concord in the early 1830's with his wife, Rebecca Gustine of Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Until the Civil War, he and his wife lived at Concord rearing their children John, Stephen, William, James, Duncan, Henry, Frank, and Katherine, and enjoying the pleasures of southern life. Although members of the family made frequent trips to the North and yearly visits to New Orleans, they were deeply attached to "home" and their "way of life." Pleasant intercourse with their many friends in the Natchez region and when in Louisiana with those at the Duncan F. Kenner and Henry Doyal plantations in Ascension, and at the McCollum, Cage, and Gibson plantations in Terrebonne provided the human associations so dear to the Southerner.

¹ This paper is based entirely upon materials in the William J. Minor Collection in the Department of Archives of Louisiana State University. The collection consists of personal correspondence and plantation records. Most of the information in this study was derived from the thirty-eight volumes of the plantation diaries and ledgers covering the years from 1847 to 1870. For a full description of this collection, see William R. Hogan (ed), *Guide to Manuscript Collections, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University* (Baton Rouge, 1940). Statistical information on the size of the plantations, amount of livestock, and valuation was taken from the manuscript returns of the agricultural census of 1860, which are in the Duke University Library, Durham, North Carolina.

In politics, Minor, like most other large slaveholders of the lower South, was a Whig. His position on important political issues was conditioned by his interests as a slaveholder and sugar planter. Above all, he was interested in the preservation of slavery, his principal capital investment and labor system, and in a protective tariff on sugar which would assure profitable prices for domestic producers. Minor was firmly opposed to secession, not only because he was deeply attached to the Union, but also because he was convinced that such an act would be disastrous to the sugar industry of the South. As early as 1856 he termed "perfect madness" the view of some of his fellow planters that secession would result in benefits to the South. When events moved rapidly toward a dissolution of the Union in 1860 he opposed it "to the utmost of [his] . . . ability" for he was "most apprehensive it would lead to war and war to emancipation."

From his family residence near Natchez, Minor directed the management of his Louisiana holdings. Like those of other absentee owners, Minor's diary is a record of problems and activities peculiar to those planters trying to conduct large-scale agricultural enterprise through overseer supervision and the entrusting of resident management to young sons. Ultimate control of management policies was at all times retained by Minor, himself.

From about 1855 until late in 1861 when he joined the Confederate Army, Minor's son, Stephen, lived at Waterloo and managed the plantation. In 1862 another son, Henry, or "Hally" as he was more familiarly known, replaced his brother there. William, another brother, lived at Southdown and managed it and Hollywood. Minor visited all three of his Louisiana places frequently and when away kept in constant touch with them by mail. Although an absentee owner, he was in no sense a negligent one, for at all times he had detailed knowledge of plantation affairs. How able the sons were as managers, it seems impossible to ascertain. Only on one occasion did Minor comment in his diary on their work. On March 23, 1859, he arrived at Waterloo and at seven-thirty that evening wrote in his diary that Stephen "left this morning at 9:30 A. M. to go 4 miles above this & has not yet returned

. . . He seems never to think of the Plantation, but is willing to leave it on any pretext whatever & generally stays away from 6 to 26 hours."

It is not surprising that his unmarried sons, Stephen and William, sought society in hunting and fishing trips and in visits to other plantations, for life on a plantation could be exceedingly lonely and unattractive for an unmarried man. This, Minor was to realize himself after spending some months at Southdown in 1862 and 1863. On February 5, 1863, he wrote: "I am more satisfied we have done wrong to allow our sons to be alone on plantations—They must at time be very unhappy—besides the danger of getting into bad habits . . . It will not do—They must marry or give up staying alone on plantations. The want of society is *terrible*."

Apparently the duties of the sons did not in their view necessitate their constant presence on the plantation since supervision of routine activities rested with the overseers. Unfortunately, the overseers upon whom Minor was dependent proved in many instances unsatisfactory. In the years 1847-1860 there were seven different overseers employed at Waterloo, but only three at Southdown from 1849 to 1860. Alexander Nisbet who was hired August 17, 1847, to oversee at Waterloo remained until his death from heart attack, July 25, 1852. On December 13, 1852, James K. Metcalfe took charge there, but at the end of his year, December 15, 1853, Minor "declined to reengage him for another year—at which he was much enraged & left vowing vengeance." Metcalfe was followed by Arthur St. Ament who was paid \$1,200 a year. Why he left in 1855 we do not know, but at any rate on August 2, 1855, David Gray was put in charge at \$800. The following year his salary was raised to \$1,000. His term of service ended May 3, 1858, when he was discharged "for being off the place at night." His successor, W. F. Harson, quit April 11, 1860, because his wages of \$800 a year were not sufficient for him. William F. Gray who became overseer at Southdown, March 5, 1849, at \$1,000 a year remained until February 4, 1856. No reason is given for his departure. His successor, one Deputy, lasted only until May 16, 1856, when he was discharged "for insolence."

In every case, Minor hired his overseers at a monthly or yearly rate, the contract to be terminated by either party whenever dissatisfied. Since southern planters frequently knew little of their overseers before they were hired, the right to discharge at will was probably thought necessary. Yet, such insecurity of tenure would not be attractive to able managers. In the management of large numbers of Negroes, there were many instances when an overseer's actions might so infuriate the planter as to result in the loss of a job. This insecurity of tenure undoubtedly contributed to the perpetuation of an incapable group of overseers and frequently resulted in undesirable relations between planter and overseer.

That Minor was exacting in his demands upon his overseers and gave them specific instructions as to their duties and responsibilities, is indicated by the following extract from the "Rules and Regulations" for the overseers at Waterloo, Southdown, and Hollywood:

He will give the whole of his time and talents to the interests of his employer.

He must treat all the negroes with kindness and humanity both in sickness and in health—When sick he must see that they have every necessary attention & convenience & that the Doctors directions are strictly attended to in every particular.

He must see that the hands are at work as soon as they can [see] to work and that one and all do a good days work according to their strength . . . He must not strike the negroes with anything but his whip, except in self defence—He must not cut the skin when punishing, nor punish in a passion—He must not use abusive language to nor threaten the negroes, as it makes them unhappy and sometimes induces them to run away.

Although Minor was an experienced cotton planter, when he acquired his first sugar plantation in the 1830's he knew little of the culture of sugar cane. Experienced as he was in general agricultural practices, however, he applied himself systematically to the problems of his new culture. He read the agricultural journals of the day, especially articles on sugar cultivation and manufacture in *De Bow's Review*, and compared his own experiences with those of Henry Doyal and Duncan F. Kenner, both widely experienced planters.

On the selection of cane for seed, the putting up of seed cane, the

width of rows, fertilization, crop rotation, windrowing as protection from freezing,² and drainage of his lands, he made repeated experiments. The plantations were divided into fields which in turn were divided into plots. The plots were numbered and accurate records were kept of plantings and yields in the respective plots in order to discover satisfactory rotation schemes for each field. A normal rotation system for a field was: first year, plant cane; second year, first year stubble; third year, second year stubble; fourth year, corn and peas. Sometimes the pea vines were plowed in, at other times they were not.

In 1848, bagasse³ was tried as fertilizer for corn on several fields but no mention was made of the result. Commencing in 1855 both guano and domestic manure were from time to time used for fertilization but there is no evidence that any systematic plan of fertilizing was followed. Minor's experiments led him to the following conclusions: that healthy, vigorous, and straight canes should be selected for seed; that, in planting, two stalks well lapped were necessary to secure a good stand; that six feet was the best width for cane rows; that windrowing was a valuable protection from freezing provided it was done before the cane was frozen and the eyes killed; and that the windrowing should be begun by the middle of November. On all of the above points, Minor's conclusions are in virtual agreement with accepted practice today.

All three of the Minor plantations were well stocked. On October 7, 1849, the livestock at Waterloo included: 77 hogs and pigs, 257 sheep, 78 work horses and mules, 7 saddle horses, 25 non-working out horses, 74 work oxen, 17 milking cows, 17 calves, 20 dry cows, 4 yearlings, and 2 bulls.

The most important work animal on the ante-bellum sugar plantation was the mule, and the arduous work which this animal had to perform during cultivation and harvesting made frequent purchases necessary to maintain a sufficient working force. In the years 1849-1861, Minor bought seventy mules and three work horses. Generally the

² Windrowing is the practice of cutting the cane and laying it in the rows layer upon layer so that the stalk is protected by the leaves of each succeeding stalk.

³ Bagasse is the remainder of the crushed stalk after the juice has been extracted at the mill.

mules were bought from dealers who visited the plantations, but in February, 1861, twenty were purchased in New Orleans. The price paid ranged from \$180 to \$200 each, payment within twelve months.

The plantation of the ante-bellum South, like other economic institutions, must in final analysis be judged by how well it provided for its workers. On such matters as the level of living, health conditions, efficiency, and general care of the labor force, conclusions are essential to any evaluation of the plantation as a socio-economic institution. Upon each of the above, Minor's diary furnishes some information, fragmentary though it may be in some instances.

As on other sugar plantations, the slaves were organized for work into gangs, each under the supervision of a first and second driver. It would be interesting to know more about the drivers—their ages, type of Negro, methods used to get work from the slaves, and the attitude of the other Negroes toward them—for it must be apparent that the driver occupied a position of considerable importance in the production of the crops. On the Minor plantation, the duties of the first driver were as follows:

He must obey all the orders of the Overseer. He must see that all the hands under him in the field, do their duty, and punish them in a proper manner unless they do. He must not allow any loud talking or quarreling in the field or in the Quarter, or on the place. . . .

He must take care that the people do not leave the Quarters without permission, that they are all in or at their houses, at the proper time after the wringing of the bell. . . .

He must not allow the negroes to use or keep or drink spirituous liquors of any kind, and above all must not do it himself.

He must never in punishment cut the skin or bruise in any way, the person punished. . . . He must never strike with anything but the lash of his whip.

He must treat all the negroes alike, showing neither love nor hatred to any one, but be just in all things to all.

He must so conduct himself as that there shall be no complaints of his being too intimate with the wives and daughters of the other men. He must by no means attempt to [be] come the Ondidonk over the people, for if he does burnt brandy should not save him from the most severe punishment.

It has long been assumed by critics that slave labor was notoriously inefficient. This assumption has been made in most cases without sup-

porting evidence. Perhaps the best test of labor efficiency on a sugar plantation would be the number of acres of land cultivated per working hand and the amount of cane cut by each hand. On Waterloo plantation in 1861 a total of 1,102 acres were cultivated in all crops by 224 Negroes of all ages. Of these, 101 were under fifteen years of age, leaving 123 adult field hands of both sexes. In that year each full hand cultivated almost nine acres. Minor estimated that a good hand in good cane would windrow for the mill three fourths of an acre a day and that the gang would average half an acre. These figures compare most favorably with work done by the Negro under freedom. In so far as it is possible to reach a conclusion from partial evidence, slave labor on the Minor plantations was probably as efficient as present day Negro labor at the same kind of work.

The basic essentials in the level of living of any group are food, clothing, and shelter. Reasonable adequacy in all these are requirements for any laboring force. Rations for each full hand on the Minor plantations consisted of three and a half pounds of pork or bacon a week, as much bread and molasses as they could eat, and "also vegetables of the season—as many as they can eat." They were also allowed to cultivate patches of their own in vegetables, and keep chickens and other fowls. The acreage cultivated in patches by Negroes at Waterloo varied from an average of a third of an acre per family in 1848 to one acre in 1861. During cultivating season from March to October, slaves did not work the plantation crops on Sundays and were free to work in their own patches then. From time to time they were allowed Saturday afternoons to work in their vegetables.

Food for the Negroes was prepared at special kitchens. The cooks were to scrub these and clean up around them twice a week, and the "cooking utensils & the buckets of the people must be kept perfectly clean *at all times*." Food was to be well cooked "with the greatest cleanliness" and "Some vegetable of the season must be cooked every day in sufficient quantities for all hands."

The Negroes kept chickens and sold both chickens and eggs. Apparently Minor used this means of enabling them to earn their own spend-

ing money and at the same time of furnishing the plantation with chickens and eggs. Such articles as tobacco and sweets were kept in the plantation storeroom and sold to the slaves.

Negro clothing consisted of shirts, pants, coats, and shoes for the men, and frocks, underclothing (drawers and chemises), coats, and shoes for the women. Materials were bought and the clothes made on the plantations. Shoes were either brogans or boots, the latter used by the field laborers while ditching and working in the swamps. Apparently, field workers received one pair of shoes a year; it is likely that many went barefooted throughout the summer. The diary gives no description of the slave quarters. It is reasonable to suppose that they were little or no different from those on other plantations—white-washed cabins of wood of one or two rooms per family, arranged in rows.

South Louisiana, with its hot, humid climate, mosquitoes, swamps, and lack of sanitation facilities, was not a very healthy area. Some sickness was almost always present among the Negroes of a plantation and epidemics were not unusual. Such random entries in the plantation diary as the following give an insight into the problem of health: June 9, 1851, "Lost 40 men & women & children by cholera (except 3)"; September 10, 1851, "a great deal of sickness on the place [Waterloo] for the last six weeks have averaged 25 in the Hospital—Intermittant & Dingué fever influenza & grippe"; on September 30, 1855, eighty-six were on the sick list at Waterloo, principally with fever. In August, 1857, Dr. Jennings thought Coleman, a Negro at Waterloo, had inflammation of the bladder. Minor thought he was "humbugging." On September 17, 1857, seventy were in the hospital at Southdown, the greater number with mumps, boils, and fever and "all the nurses broke down." In 1858, things were no different. Random entries read: "23 sick—17 mumps"; "a good deal of fever among the Negroes"; "some 10 or 12 in the Hospital no one much sick"; "Health of the place not so good 32 in the Hospital"; "influenza . . . epidemic on the place."

A plantation hospital for the sick was advisable for several reasons. Had each family cared for its own sick, it would have been more difficult to control disease, and epidemics would have been more likely. Then, too, with the women working there would be no one to care for the sick in their cabins. Thus the community hospital was the logical solution. As soon as the sick were able, they were made to sew or knit. The hospital and the grounds around it were cleaned up twice a week by Minor's orders.

Diet, shelter, disease—all of these should be reflected in the death rate. On January 22, 1850, there were 203 Negroes at Southdown, 85 men and boys, 64 women and girls, and 54 children under twelve. In the thirteen years from 1850 through 1862, 148 children were born and 74 persons died. From 1834 to 1858, 236 births and 131 deaths were recorded at Waterloo—37 of the deaths were from cholera in the epidemic of 1851. As is clear from the above, there was a sizeable margin of births over deaths on both places, making for a reasonable rate of population growth. On the whole, the slave families were not unusually large. For example, of the 219 Negroes at Southdown on January 1, 1852, 206 were in 53 families (making an average of 3.7 per family) and 13 were unattached. At Waterloo, on July 16, 1852, 260 out of the total of 271 were in 55 families, ranging from 2 to 11 in a family, the average number being 4.7.

It is interesting to note the causes given for the deaths of the Southdown slaves for several years. In 1852, there were five deaths, one of old age, one of inflammation of the brain, one of worms and inflammation of the bowels, one of fever, and one killed in the engine. In 1853, two died of typhus fever, two of scarlet fever, one from a fall, and one of dysentery. In 1855, when eleven died, dysentery, pneumonia, inflammation of the bowels, consumption, fever, and old age were given as causes. It can be seen that both diseases of the region and diseases of class were those that took the lives of the laborers at Southdown.

Minor made meticulous rules for the supervision of the slaves. In the absence of other motivation, disciplined behavior and punishment for misdeeds were necessary to effective production and community life.

The overseer was instructed to examine the quarters at night to see that the Negroes were there. Slaves were not to leave the plantation, nor to come on the place without a pass. Men were not to beat their wives. Marriages could take place only after a month's notice of intention had been given; the same was true of divorces. The following selection from Minor's instructions to his overseers in December, 1861, gives a fairly complete picture of the control under which the Negro lived:

When the weather is fine push the work. When the weather is bad, cold and wet, keep the hands out of it as much as possible & let them get in earlier at night— . . .

People must be well taken care of when sick & must be punished *always* if they lay up when not sick . . .

Discipline—Strict discipline must be maintained at all times—No fighting or quareling must be allowed—Nor must bad language be used by any one at any time . . .

Holy-Days—Give from Christmas eve to the Monday morning following—They can dance in the Shop—Put the Ball & lights in charge of Bailey & three others. . . . Give a barrel of flour $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a barrel of sugar to make cakes— & a hog for the supper. Strict decorum must be preserved at the Ball—No one must ware a hat in the room.

How did the Negro perform under the thoroughgoing social control of the plantation? On such significant matters as relationships among each other, the diary offers no information. But on the slave's behavior in matters pertaining to the plantation, information is available. In the years from 1845 to 1861, the only misdeed that seemed to recur often enough to be called habitual among the plantation Negroes at Waterloo, Southdown, and Hollywood was stealing. Such entries as the following picture the plantation slave as possessed of "taking" proclivities: Waterloo, August 24, 1851, "Garden was robbed a few days ago worked all hands [Sunday] as a punishment"; Sunday, September 12, 1852, "All hands at work . . . to pay for a pig & turkey stolen"; Sunday, March 12, 1854, "Worked all hands for killing a pig on Friday night"; September 27, 1855, "the negros have stolen nearly all pomegranites & killed some sheep"; Sunday, August 1, 1858, "Southdown—hands at work for stealing sugar." Although whiskey was forbidden

the Negroes on the Minor plantations, it was difficult to keep them from buying it should the chance arise when they had a little money. On January 31, 1857, William J. Minor "Went over the river to see Mr. Dominique about his man Julianne who had been selling whiskey" to the Negroes at Waterloo.

The Minor plantations, like most ante-bellum plantations, were occasionally bothered by runaways. Usually the runaways returned voluntarily within a few days, or they would be apprehended and put in jail, from which the overseer by paying the costs could take them back to the plantation. The causes of running away were mainly the following: (1) frequently a Negro who had committed a misdeed would run away from fear of being punished; (2) recently purchased Negroes occasionally ran away without any particular reason other than lack of adjustment to their new home or homesickness for their old one; (3) occasionally a slave, tired of his regular life, would "take off" for a few days. The number of runaways from the three plantations was exceptionally small; only eleven were mentioned in the diary for Waterloo and Southdown from 1855 to 1861. When slaves misbehaved, punishment took the form of extra or more distasteful work, flogging, or confinement in the stocks.

The regular force of the overseer and the Negro slaves was increased during the grinding season by the addition of seasonal hired labor. A sugar maker and engineer were usually engaged in the summer for the grinding season in the fall. The former was paid according to the size of the crop. For example, Jean Dahan of St. James was hired July 4, 1849, to make the sugar at Southdown at \$1 per hogshead, up to a maximum of \$400. The engineer was occasionally hired by the season, but more generally at a monthly figure of \$150 for three months in the fall. Minor's sugar apparatus consisted of steam mills, open kettles, and steam strike pans. Although not the most improved sugar machinery of the period, it was superior to the simple open kettle apparatus and necessitated the services of an engineer.

The scores of buildings required on a large sugar plantation made carpentering second in importance only to the actual production of a

crop. Much of this labor could be and was performed by the slaves, but the hiring of skilled white carpenters from time to time was quite general. From 1846 to 1862 there was a skilled white carpenter at work on one of the three Minor plantations a good part of every year. Alexander Nisbet worked as a carpenter at Waterloo at \$50 per month from January 10 to September 24, 1846, and from February 1 to August 17, 1847, when he became overseer there. Charles Minty began working at Southdown in 1851 for \$50 a month and continued to work there and at Hollywood through 1866. Until 1863 he worked as a carpenter, but was overseer from 1863 to 1866. Beginning in 1854, he received an additional \$100 for extra services during grinding, making his annual earnings approximately \$700. On occasions when there were several cabins, stables, and outbuildings to be constructed, as at Hollywood in 1858 and 1859, additional carpenters and masons and their Negro helpers were hired to do the work. At times Minor hired a contractor to ditch new land being brought under the plow. He paid for this by the acre according to the size of the ditch.

Once the sugar and molasses had been made it was put in wooden hogsheads and barrels for shipment to market. The hogshead, each of which contained about 1,000 to 1,100 pounds of sugar, and the barrels, each holding from 40 to 50 gallons of molasses, were made of cypress or hickory, usually by Negro coopers on the plantations. More infrequently they were bought from neighborhood or New Orleans coopers, at prices ranging from \$1.25 to \$1.50 each for the barrels. Even when the cooperage was done on the plantation the hogshead poles and barrel staves were usually bought from outside cooperage firms at prices ranging from \$50 to \$100 per thousand for poles and from \$15 to \$22.50 for staves.

Once the sugar and molasses were ready for market—the marketing season extending from early November to early summer—the planter began his shipments. At Waterloo, it was relatively easy to haul the sugar and molasses to the steamboat landing where one of the river boats would pick them up. With the Southdown and Hollywood crops in Terrebonne, the problem of shipping was more difficult, for the

shipment had to pass from Bayou Black through several bayous and inland waterways before reaching the Gulf.

Minor sold most of his crop and bought his supplies through his New Orleans factor, W. P. Leverich and Company. Not infrequently, he shipped to C. P. Leverich in New York and occasionally up the Mississippi and Ohio to Cincinnati. In only two instances did he record the selling of his crop on the plantation. On April 22, 1856, he sold about two hundred hogsheads in the sugarhouse at Waterloo to Captain Dugan at six and a half cents a pound. Again on March 10, 1858, he sold the Southdown and Hollywood crops to Captain Dugan at six cents a pound.

Sugar planting was an expensive enterprise in ante-bellum days, for the planter was both grower of cane and manufacturer of sugar. A well equipped sugar plantation, in addition to land, possessed Negroes, livestock, farm implements, and a sugarhouse. For example, the farm utensils at Southdown in February, 1856, included: 29 carts and wagons, 54 plows, 15 chains, 12 sets of wagon gears, 52 sets of plow gears, 18 saddles, 8 harrows, 46 axes, 40 wedges, 32 saws, 89 cane knives, 82 hoes, 32 spades and shovels, 12 whet stones, 4 scythes, and several rakes and pitchforks. In 1860, Waterloo, Southdown, and Hollywood plantations with their 9,300 acres and approximately four hundred slaves of all ages had a total valuation of almost one million dollars.

Since sugar cane was the only cash crop on the three plantations, the financial success of the plantations depended upon the returns from sugar and molasses and the costs of staple provisions, principally pork, corn, and cotton goods. In the fifteen years from 1844 to 1861 (no figures are available for 1846, 1847, and 1848), Waterloo produced 6,125 hogsheads of sugar of one thousand pounds each, making an average annual crop of 408 hogsheads. In the fourteen years from 1845 to 1861 Southdown made 8,682 hogsheads or an annual average of 620 hogsheads, and from 1855 to 1861 Hollywood averaged 190 hogsheads. Figures are not available on financial returns and operating costs for each year, but fortunately Minor's ledgers do contain accurate figures for a sufficient number of years to make possible a

general conclusion as to the profitability of the enterprise. In the years 1837-1850 and 1852 the total returns from the sale of the Waterloo crops were \$205,755.88 and total operating expenses were \$143,112.07. This gives an excess of returns over expenditures of \$62,643.81, or an average of \$4,176.25 per year. On a capital investment of \$211,500 (Minor's estimate in 1837), this indicates a net return of not quite two per cent.

In the nine years from 1846 through 1854, the gross returns from the Southdown crops were \$265,111.68 and total operating expenses were \$164,229.88, making an average annual excess of receipts over expenditures of \$11,209.09. On the basis of a cash valuation in 1850 of approximately \$203,000 (\$88,000 in land, \$10,000 in implements and machinery, \$5,000 in livestock, and \$100,000 in Negroes), this indicates an annual net return of 5.5 per cent. If net profits alone be considered, Minor's sugar planting venture was certainly no notable success, for the profits were hardly comparable to the return in other branches of economic activity. This is not so surprising, for agricultural economists have long claimed that only in rare instances is agriculture a profitable economic pursuit if subjected to the same accounting measures as are applied to commerce and industry. In the matter of finances, the southern planter had two principal considerations. In the first place, he desired his annual income to exceed his expenditures so as to make possible a high standard of living. Secondly, he wanted the valuation of his property to increase, for upon this he depended for credit in hard times and when he desired to add to his possessions. In each of the years considered, Minor's receipts exceeded his operating expenses, thereby enabling him and his family to maintain a high level of living without incurring debt. On the matter of the valuation of the plantations, the figures are impressive. Whereas Waterloo was worth \$211,500 in 1837, it was worth approximately \$370,000 in 1850 and almost \$500,000 in 1860. Southdown increased in value from \$203,000 in 1850 to about \$450,000 in 1860. Minor may not have been making money "hand over fist" according to Yankee notions, but he was un-

doubtedly getting richer and richer in land and Negroes. After all that was what counted in the plantation South.

If the war had not come, what then? The Minor plantations and others like them might have gone on substantially as they were for another generation or so, but in time drastic changes could not have been avoided. With increasing competition and falling sugar prices, scientific advances in methods of production, and a revolution in transportation, much of the old had to go. But the transition would have been easier. Capital might have been available when it was so badly needed and labor would probably have been more plentiful and more efficient had it not experienced so great a change in so short a time. The land and the people could have faced a future that was bound to be hard for the Louisiana sugar industry with at least the assurance that their assets were many and their chances of survival good.