

THE PLANTERS AND THEIR SLAVES: ATTITUDES TOWARD NEGRO SLAVES
IN COLONIAL SOUTH CAROLINA AND JAMAICA

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by
Benton R. White
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Approved:



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Dean of the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

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Purpose

The purpose of this thesis has been to study attitudes held toward Negro slaves in the British colonies of South Carolina and Jamaica. Slave populations greatly exceeded the number of whites in each colony and broadly similar views on race and slavery seem to have emerged. It is the prime purpose of this study to attempt a comparative analysis of attitudes towards slavery and slaves in these two colonies before the American Revolution.

The study focuses on the opinions of slaveholding planters in an effort to ascertain an answer to three questions: what were the dominant or fundamental attitudes whites held toward blacks, how were these attitudes similar or different between the respective colonies, and how did these views affect the history of each colony?

Methods

In seeking an answer to these questions, the behavior of planters was examined more closely than any other factor. The written records slaveholders left were not ignored, but they were considered secondary in importance for purposes of this study. Slavery through the eighteenth

century was an increasingly controversial issue; as a result, what was said (or written) and what was believed were often two different things. An investigation of reactions to a slave revolt, for example, proved more enlightening than poring over planter-inscribed treatises that championed the institution of slavery. Contemporary histories, records of legislation, and travelogues were all invaluable primary sources. Considerable information was also drawn from secondary works dealing with slavery in British America.

Findings

The whole history of planter-slave relations in South Carolina and Jamaica was one of conflicting emotions. Planters were continually torn between a desire for slaves and the benefits their labor entailed and a wish to remove themselves from the presence of so many blacks. These conflicting interests were ultimately resolved through the system of absentee planting.

Paradoxically, the absentee system had opposite effects on each colony. In South Carolina absentee planting assured whites that they would remain dominant over their slaves; planters assembled in the city of Charlestown where they established a kind of racial and cultural bastion for whites. In Jamaica, however, absentee planting contributed to the weakening of European culture. Absentee planting in

Jamaica meant returning to Britain, a circumstance that caused an irreparable drain of wealth and talent from the island colony and resulted in the atrophy of its social fibre.

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Supervising Professor

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CHAPTER I

BLACK LABOR AND PLANTER AFFLUENCE

In the latter 1600's a traveller through the English West Indies was fairly stupefied by the affluent civilization he encountered. On the island of Barbados, he noted, great sugar cane planters lived in a manner far superior to that of the English gentry. The sugar magnates' furnishings, modes of transportation, and manner of dress were all magnificent. Their servants, Negro slaves from Africa, were more numerous than servants possessed by many European noblemen and catered to the planters' every whim.¹

Here was a way of life to excite the imagination, a chance for a commoner to live as a king. Through a planter's existence and a slave's labor one might realize his wildest desires for wealth and power. In consequence, the Barbadian lifestyle soon spread to other quarters, first to other English Caribbean islands, and later to the southeastern portion of continental English America. Throughout these regions there evolved English settlements

¹John Oldmixon, The British Empire in America, Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and State of the Continent and Islands of America, II ([n.p.] : [n.n.], 1708), 128, cited by Edward McCrady, The History of South Carolina Under the Proprietary Government 1670-1719 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1897), pp. 355-56.

of great plantations, ruled by white masters and worked by black slaves, colonies dedicated to the acquisition of vast agrarian fortunes.

Two colonies that followed the Barbados example were the island of Jamaica and the mainland settlement of South Carolina. In Jamaica colonists grew rich by planting sugar cane while in South Carolina planters made their fortune through cultivating rice. As a result, the two regions came to resemble Barbados and also, to a remarkable degree, one another. So alike were the cultures of Jamaica and South Carolina, in fact, that nothing short of cataclysmic disaster could alter their similarity. Planters in both Jamaica and South Carolina developed comparable attitudes toward themselves and their respective colonies. So too did the sugar and rice planters develop a network of broadly similar attitudes toward the labor force which held their worlds together--the Negro slaves.

By the 1690's Carolina and Jamaica planters were in the enviable position of seeking to meet the tremendous world demand for products that each colony was uniquely suited to produce. The opportunity was virtually unparalleled. The affluent life of the Barbadian planters not only could be emulated but surpassed. Neither Jamaica nor South Carolina suffered from a shortage of arable land as did tiny Barbados; it was conceded, according to

historian Ulrich Phillips, that the larger an estate, the greater its prospect for net earnings.² The availability of land set off in each colony a "wild orgy of land grabbing" and a nearly quenchless thirst for cheap slave labor.³ Jamaican sugar estates soon grew to average nearly two hundred slaves while Carolina rice plantations generally contained thirty to one hundred Negro laborers.⁴ The demand for slaves soared, and the Negro laborer, like the land itself, became for the planters the very source of wealth and the lifeblood of their economies.

So great was the demand for slaves that African imports rose in cost even when increasing numbers were accessible for purchase. Seventeenth-century prices in Jamaica were about fifteen pounds for male Negroes, (females brought somewhat less). During the 1730's the price was twenty-four pounds, and by the 1770's young Negro males

²Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1918), p. 65.

³David Duncan Wallace, South Carolina: A Short History 1520-1948 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), p. 156.

⁴Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, The Slave Economy of the Old South: Selected Essays in Economic and Social History, ed. Eugene D. Genovese (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), pp. 11-12; Alexander Garden to Philip Bearcroft, May 6, 1740, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Manuscripts, B7, Part II, p. 235, cited by Frank J. Klingberg, An Appraisal of the Negro In Colonial South Carolina: A Study in Americanization (Washington: The Associated Publishers, 1941), p. 105.

were purchased for sixty pounds sterling.⁵ The price for slaves in the mid-eighteenth century fairly soared; by 1776 blacks sold at more than twice what they had cost twenty years previously.⁶

Prices rose in similar fashion along the rice coast of Carolina where planters sometimes journeyed eighty or ninety miles to the Charlestown slave markets in search of additional laborers. Negroes purchased for less than twenty pounds in the seventeenth century were bought for almost triple that amount by 1770.⁷ The desire for slaves approached a state of frenzy; and on at least one occasion, according to the rice planter Henry Laurens, "There was such pulling and hauling," over who should get the good slaves that some planters "came to collaring and very nearly to Blows."⁸ So necessary seemed the Negro for the attainment

⁵Phillips, ed. Genovese, p. 141; Anon, Importance of the Sugar Colonies to Great Britain ([n.p.], [n.n.], 1745), pp. 7-8, cited by Frank Wesley Pitman, The Development of the British West Indies 1700-1763 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917), p. 89.

⁶Edward Long, The History of Jamaica or General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island: With Reflections of its Situations, Settlements, Inhabitants, Climate, Products, Commerce, Laws and Government, I (2nd ed.; London: Frank Cass and Co., 1970), 381-82.

⁷Henry Laurens to Samuel and William Vernon, July 5, 1756, Philip H. Hamer (ed.), The Papers of Henry Laurens, II (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 238; Phillips, ed. Genovese, p. 141.

⁸Henry Laurens to Corsley Rogers, August 1, 1755, Hamer (ed.), I, 307.

of riches that soon he became the single greatest investment of the planter class.⁹

The demand for slaves also caused an incredible increase in the number of blacks imported to and residing in each colony. Negro slaves in the 1670's were shipped to Jamaica at a rate of fifteen hundred annually. By the following decade, however, it was two thousand per annum, and by the close of the seventeenth century 4,500 Africans were arriving on the island each year. Through the following century the rate of importation continued to climb until by the 1760's ten to fifteen thousand blacks entered Jamaica annually. This influx caused the number of blacks residing in Jamaica to jump from only 9,504 in 1673 to 86,546 in 1734 and upwards to 166,914 by 1768. As a result, by mid-eighteenth century blacks comprised 90 per cent of the island's population.¹⁰

The Carolina rice coast experienced a similar flood of black imports. From 1706 to 1724 there arrived only three hundred slaves annually; but in the 1750's black importation had risen to 1,500 each year, and by 1765 it was in excess of 7,000. So immense was the demand for Negro labor that in 1773 over 11,000 Africans were shipped to

⁹Augustine T. Smythe and others, The Carolina Low-Country (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 177.

¹⁰Richard S. Dunn, Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of The Planter Class In The English West Indies, 1624-1713 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 165; Long I, 376-77; II, 442.

South Carolina. Overall numbers of slaves increased from a relative handful in 1670 to above 11,000 in 1720, 70,000 in 1763, and in excess of 100,000 by 1775, nearly 60 percent of the colony's inhabitants.¹¹

Qualities which made for "good Slaves" were recognized and eagerly sought out, "qualities" that for the most part meant sturdy constitutions. In South Carolina, Henry Laurens called always for a tall and robust people, slaves with strong limbs and stout backs. "Our planters," he wrote, "almost to a Man are desirous of large strong People . . . and will not touch small limb'd People when such can be had."¹² Newspapers announced the arrival of African imports, emphasizing, invariably, their health and suitability for labor: "JUST arrived in the SCOW 'Betsy' . . . 'Two Hundred' and 'Forty' as Fine Healthy SLAVES, as ever appeared in this Province. . . ."¹³

¹¹Elizabeth Donnan, Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America, IV (Washington: [n.n.], 1935), 255, 338, cited by Klingberg, p. 78; Edward McGrady, "Slavery In The Province Of South Carolina 1670-1770," Annual Report of the American Historical Association (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), p. 669.

¹²Henry Laurens to Gidney Clarke, June 26, 1756, Hamer (ed.), II, 230.

¹³South Carolina Gazette, August 4, 1758, cited by Ibid., II, 547.

Young blacks, fifteen to twenty-five years of age were most in demand. Yet Negroes were also chosen on the basis of their tribal stock. Slaves from the Gold Coast or Gambia River basin were preferred to all others by the rice planters. An agricultural people, these blacks were considered most suitable for labor in the rice fields. Iboes were thought to be a poor lot, despondent and prone to suicide. Whydahs, Nagoes, and Paw Paws, however, were all reputed to be industrious and of sound body.¹⁴

Age, size, and tribal distinctions were noticed and valued by Jamaica planters also. Coromantees, a rugged people from the Gold Coast were prized for their ability to withstand the rigorous labor of the cane fields while Congos and Angolas, though considered less intelligent, were valued because of their immunity from disease.¹⁵ Planters having a preference for those of a particular tribe made sure of getting them by taking to the "Guinea yards" blacks from the stock desired; these blacks interrogated those for sale in their own language.¹⁶

Unlike the Virginia tobacco plantation, which resembled in some respects an English manor, estates in Jamaica and South Carolina were of a more commercial nature with little personal contact between planter and laborer.

¹⁴Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, May 17, 1756, Ibid., II, 186; Phillips, Slavery, p. 52; Smythe and others, p. 175.

¹⁵Long, II, 403-4. ¹⁶Phillips, Slavery, p. 52.

Blacks on rice and sugar estates were worked like animals and treated accordingly. Consequently, the tone of management on sugar and rice estates was not unlike that of the factories of the nineteenth century. As described by Phillips:

Laborers were considered more as work-units than men, women, and children. Kindness and comfort, cruelty and hardship, were rated at balance-sheet value; births and deaths were reckoned in profit and loss, and the expense of rearing children was balanced against the cost of new Africans.¹⁷

From a purely economic standpoint it appears to have been cheaper to work slaves to exhaustion and buy new ones than to endeavor to increase the number and efficiency of those at hand. Like the aged, children were a liability that could not contribute to the enhancement of the planter's fortune. Of labor on Jamaica sugar estates, one island visitor wrote:

The slaves know no end to their labour; they are followed throughout their work by the lower overseers with whips, exactly in the same manner as horses are in England. . . . The consequence of this system is seen in the decrease of the stock; so that a plantation in Jamaica which employs one hundred slaves requires an annual supply of seven to keep up the number.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Phillips, ed. Genovese, p. 84; Anon., American Husbandry: Containing an Account of the SOIL, CLIMATE, PRODUCTION and AGRICULTURE of the BRITISH COLONIES in North America and the West Indies with Observations on the Advantages and Disadvantages of settling in them, compared with Great Britain and Ireland, eds. Harry J. Carmen and Rexford G. Tugwell (2nd ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 426.

Continuing on his journey, the traveller found no let up in the severity of plantation labor upon reaching South Carolina. He wrote:

If a work could be imagined peculiarly unwholesome and even fatal to health, it must be that of standing like the negroes, ankle and even mid-leg deep in water which floats an ouzy mud, and exposed all the while to a burning sun which makes the very air they breathe hotter than the human blood. . . .¹⁹

He acknowledged that South Carolina blacks bred at a faster rate than they were destroyed; yet he warned that it was not on the rice plantations--those "properly denominated dismals" where such was the case.²⁰

Slaves employed on rice plantations decreased considerably. In fact, field labor with the hoe was termed "killing" work.²¹ Yet what was deadly for the slave was lucrative for the master, and the combination of agricultural profits and slave mortality only heightened the planter's desire for laborers.

"As wealthy as a West Indian" was proverbial in the eighteenth-century British vernacular.²² Sugar planters of the Caribbean were conspicuously rich men and no greater number possessed more wealth than did the great slaveholding planters from Jamaica. When Samuel Long, sugar planter and

¹⁹Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), p. 277. ²⁰Ibid.

²¹David Ramsay, History of South Carolina: From Its First Settlement in 1670 To The Year 1808, II (2nd ed.; Spartanburg, South Carolina, The Reprint Co., 1959), 288.

²²Lowell Joseph Ragatz, The Fall of The Planter Class In The British Caribbean 1763-1833: A Study in Social and Economic History (New York: The Century Co., 1928), p. VII.

councillor chief justice to the island, died at age sixty-five, he left an estate on which the lands alone were valued at twelve thousand pounds. Inventories of governor-planter Thomas Lynch's possessions valued mere furnishings in his home at £1,236. Annual returns on Jamaican estates often ran 4 to 10 per cent--a high rate of return!²³

So vital were slaves to the maintenance of such wealth that Jamaica parishes came to be valued by the number of Negroes inhabiting them. By mid-eighteenth century St. John's parish was described as not "getting forward," for its number of Negro slaves had not increased from 1745 to 1768. Another parish, St. Thomas, was deemed nonprogressive since the year 1740 when a decline in the slave population set in.²⁴

Fertile land and slave labor made eighteenth-century Jamaica the most prosperous colony in the British Caribbean. Governor Charles Knowles in 1754 estimated the worth of the Jamaican export of sugar at 1,000,000 pounds sterling, with its by-products rum and molasses netting an additional 100,000 pounds. By 1775 the combined value of sugar, rum and molasses exported from Jamaica approached 1,250,000 pounds.²⁵

²³Dunn, pp. 268-69; Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), p. 428.

²⁴Long, II, 52, 59.

²⁵Governor Charles Knowles to Board of Trade, January 12, 1754, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series Class 137, Vol. XXVII ([n.p.],[n.n.],[n.d.]), 200, cited by Pitman, p. 113; Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), p. 429.

Only in the continental colony of South Carolina did there exist a class who matched the wealth of the sugar planters. Here too, on the rice coast, men boasted great mansions and beautiful gardens, held stately balls and costly dinners, and filled their homes with lavish furnishings. By mid-eighteenth century the colony was possibly the wealthiest region on the continent and, in the estimation of one citizen, was inhabited by more men possessed of £5,000 - £10,000 than any other part of North America.²⁶

Here also, the mode of living was made possible by the Negro laborers with which the planters were surrounded. Exporting 264,000 barrels of rice in the 1720's, and nearly twice that amount by the following decade, the planters with their slaves developed a veritable caldron of economic activity. By the 1740's rice planters also found an additional source of income through the cultivation of indigo. Applying themselves (or rather their slaves) with redoubled effort, many planters increased their capital in three or four years by as much as 100 per cent. In little more than twenty years the export of indigo rose in South

²⁶Thomas J. Wertenbaker, The Golden Age of Colonial Culture (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949), p. 129; Alexander Hewatt, An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the colonies of SOUTH CAROLINA and GEORGIA, ed. Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, Vol. I, Historical Collections of South Carolina: Embracing Many Rare and Valuable Pamphlets, and Other Documents, Relating to the History of That State, From Its First Discovery To Its Independence In The Year 1776 (New York: Harper Brothers, 1836), p. 505.

Carolina from 216,000 pounds in 1754 to more than 1,000,000 pounds on the eve of the American Revolution. At the outbreak of war with Britain the export value of rice and indigo probably stood near £1,000,000.²⁷ As in Jamaica, the Negro slave soon became indispensable to the economic welfare of the South Carolina planters.

In the affluent colonies of Jamaica and South Carolina there soon developed a social aristocracy to match the economic elite. The two elements were greatly intertwined; as a result, the planters of each colony dominated socially as well as financially. Black laborers, a source of wealth, became also a symbol of affluence. In the stratified, planter-dominated colonies of South Carolina and Jamaica the possession of slaves became a mark of gentility denoting wealth and power. With nearly two hundred slaves to the plantation in Jamaica, for example, planters were necessarily equated with wealth, or at least, great financial transactions. Approximately thirty thousand pounds was required to establish and equip a plantation of this magnitude.²⁸

Planters displayed their bondsmen ostentatiously as proof of their position in the community. Twenty to forty

²⁷ Edward McCrady, The History of South Carolina Under the Royal Government 1719-1776 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1899), pp. 265, 268-70, 390.

²⁸ Carmen and Tugwell, (eds.), p. 427.

black servants in a sugar planter's household was common. Each child of a planter had his own Negro nurse, and each nurse her assistant. At one Jamaica estate the proprietor's daughter took afternoon naps while two Negroes refreshed her with a fan and a third provoked sleep by the soft scratching on the soles of her feet!²⁹

South Carolina differed little from Jamaica. Economic power and social position centered around the planters, and the possession of Negro slaves was taken as evidence of their genteel, planter status. The South Carolina planters lived as little sovereigns with household servants, field laborers, and personal attendants. Many slaves were engaged in no other task than standing before the gate of their master's plantation, encouraging all (white) travellers to stop for rest and entertainment.³⁰

Planters were known by the value of their annual produce, the extent of their lands, and the number of their slaves.³¹ From a teeming mass of black labor there was fashioned an aristocracy of white agrarians; as a result, the demand for Negroes surpassed the limits of reason. One scornful plebeian of the rice coast complained of this circumstance to the South Carolina Gazette in 1738:

²⁹Long, II, 279, 281.

³⁰McCrary, Proprietary Government, pp. 355-56; Smythe and others, p. 75.

³¹Hewatt, I, ed., Carroll, 505.

Negroes may be said to be the Bait proper for catching a Carolina Planter, as certain as Beef to catch a Shark. How many under the Notion of 18 months credit, have been tempted to buy more Negroes than they could possibly expect to pay in 3 Years! I have hear'd many declare their own folly in this Particular, with a Resolution never to do so again: yet so great is the Infatuation that the many Examples of their Neighbour's Misfortunes and Danger by such Purchases do not hinder new Fools from bringing themselves to the same Difficulty.³²

So great was the prestige associated with slaveholding planters that many townsmen purchased Negroes and country estates to be counted among their number. Thomas Hibbert, a wealthy Kingston, Jamaica merchant, purchased Agualta Vale in St. Mary's parish, to be considered a gentleman planter. In South Carolina, carpenters, brick layers, ship builders, and every other artificer and tradesman looked forward to accumulating sufficient capital to purchase a plantation, carrying as it did, some degree of a badge of gentility. Many Charlestown merchants, acquiring great wealth, retired completely from commerce to enter planting careers.³³

³²South Carolina Gazette, March 2-9, 1738, cited by Ulrich Bonnell Phillips (ed.), A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, Vol. II, Plantation and Frontier Documents: 1649-1863: Illustrative of Industrial History in the Colonial and Ante-Bellum South (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1909), pp. 51-52.

³³Frank Cundall, A Brief History of the Parish Church of St. Andrew in Jamaica (Kingston: [n.n.] , 1931), pp. 165-66, cited by Edward Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society In Jamaica 1770-1820 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 116; Hewatt, I, ed., Carroll, 377-78; Wallace, p. 191.

While possession of Negro slaves was no prerequisite to political power in either colony, the holding of property and sizable annual incomes were a circumstance which obviously favored the planters. Consequently, those who dominated financially and socially also held control of the governing bodies in each colony. Top militia officers were almost always big slaveholders. Planters held the governorship of South Carolina from its beginnings until 1725; by the eighteenth century, the colonial assembly was dominated by such men.³⁴

In Jamaica, great sugar proprietors were usually favored by the colonists as their representatives in local government. A 1680 census of St. John's parish found nine of the largest plantations containing 77 per cent of the parish slaves, with the proprietors of these estates holding the chief executive and appointive posts. Next came middling planters with ten to twenty-five laborers each, owning 16 per cent of the parish slaves and holding an occasional public post. Below these planters were small farmers with an average of two laborers apiece, owning 6 percent of the parish slaves, yet holding no public office.³⁵

³⁴Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith F. Hurwitz, Jamaica: A Historical Portrait (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), p. 23; Wallace, pp. 107-109, 163; Dunn, p. 175.

³⁵S. Hurwitz and J. Hurwitz, p. 23; Dunn, p. 172; October, 1802, Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica 1663-1826, XI (Jamaica: [n.n.], 1803-26), 10-28, cited by Brathwaite, p. 41.

The Negro was indeed "Bait proper" for catching planters. Blacks afforded a means to the pinnacle of Carolina and Jamaican civilization. Wealth, status, and political power, heretofore unobtainable, might be had as a result of slave labor. Yet the Negro offered more to the planter than heightened position in the white man's world. Turning to their own world of the plantation, rice and sugar planters found themselves possessed of unlimited authority. Isolated on their estates and totally responsible for the slave's welfare, planters were free to unleash upon bondsmen the most basic and repressed of emotions. What developed was a world shaped by naked force, where the planter's authority was God-like but his decisions all too human.

Inserted in the initial body of laws for the province of Carolina, the Fundamental Constitutions, was a provision which declared that "Every Freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over Negro Slaves. . . ." ³⁶ It was a concept which remained fundamentally unaltered. Inspired by the older, more fully developed slave code of Barbados, Carolina slave laws firmly established the dominance of the master over his bondsman. So complete was the subservient position of blacks that a requirement that all slaves be adequately clothed, the only right accorded bondsmen, by 1696 was dropped. "By the end of the

³⁶The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, July 12, 1681, Alexander Samuel Salley Jr. (ed.), Records in the British Public Record Office Relating to South Carolina 1663-1710, I (Atlanta: Foote and Davies Co., 1928), 204.

seventeenth century," according to the historian Winthrop Jordan, "the development of rice plantations and the Barbadian example had combined to yield the most rigorous deprivation of freedom to exist in institutionalized form anywhere in the English continental colonies."³⁷

The slave code was revised frequently before the 1740's. Yet revisions, though generally beneficial to the slave, never altered the fundamental nature of the law; the Negro was subordinate, his owner was the absolute master. Punishment of the slave was harsh and instantaneous, and the power of correction extended even unto death.³⁸

Blacks were at the mercy of their masters, and masters could be as cruel as they were powerful. Dr. Alexander Hewatt of Charlestown spoke of such planters as those who "inflict misery in sport, and hear the groans extorted from nature with laughter and triumph."³⁹ It was true that anyone killing a slave out of "wilfulness, wantonness, or bloody mindedness" (death or dismemberment during punishment specifically exempted) was liable to three

³⁷ Thomas Cooper and David McCord (eds.), Statutes at Large of South Carolina, VII (Columbia, South Carolina: [n.n.], 1836-41), 343, 393, cited by Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro 1550-1812 (2nd ed.; Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1969), p. 85.

³⁸ McCrady, "Slavery," pp. 645-47, 657; Hewatt, I, ed. Carroll, 349.

³⁹ Hewatt, I, ed. Carroll, 351.

months in jail and a fine of £50.⁴⁰ Yet it took little imagination on the planter's behalf to defend an act of wanton murder as punishment extended to an unruly slave. Blacks unjustly bruised or beaten could bring no action against their owners in a court of law. In suits filed on behalf of an abused slave it was virtually impossible to bring the delinquent to justice; grand juries refused to find a bill, or petit juries brought in a verdict of not guilty.⁴¹

In Jamaica, the power allotted the slaveholder was, if possible, more complete than in South Carolina. Not until 1781 in the Consolidated Slave Act did the island legislature lay down guidelines to ensure humane treatment of slaves. Until then almost any abuse of slaves was tolerated. The Negro was not the beneficiary of justice; "courts served the master's interest, not the slaves and nowhere in the statute books were there laws defining slaves' rights."⁴² Instead, laws established for slaves set limits on their behavior.

Unfortunately for the slaves of Jamaica, the want of legal protection had grim results. A Mr. Lockwood was found guilty of butchering one of his slaves, and Anne Palmer, mistress of Rose Hall plantation, St. James parish, enjoyed torturing her chattels. "The planters," wrote one

⁴⁰Cooper and McCord (eds.), Statutes VII, 343-47, cited by McCrady, Proprietary Government, p. 361.

⁴¹Hewatt, I, ed. Carroll, 350.

⁴²S. Hurwitz and J. Hurwitz, pp. 84-86.

long time Jamaican resident, "thought it no greater crime to kill a Negroe, than to knock a monkey on the head."⁴³ Some slaveholders apparently enjoyed it.

No slaves were safe from the sadistic whims of a frustrated master, be they field hands or household domestics. Henry Coor, a visitor to a Jamaica estate, described such an instance to the House of Commons:

One evening one of them [a domestic] had either broken a plate, or spilt a cup of tea, which raised his [the planter's] passion so much, that he took out a hammer and tenpenny nail, and nailed one of her ears to a bullet-tree post. . . . We went to bed, and left her standing there; in the morning we found she was gone, having torn the head of the nail through her ear.⁴⁴

Not all planters employed nor appreciated the power of the hammer and a tenpenny nail, but there was another aspect to relations between masters and slaves in which planters succumbed in great numbers, sexual unions with their female laborers. The planters of colonial Jamaica and South Carolina lived in frontier societies where women were at a premium. Surrounded by scores of blacks, one-third to one-fifth of which were female, white masters could not resist the temptation to assert their omnipotent authority in the sexual realm. A whole population, "people of color"

⁴³Clinton V. Black, History of Jamaica (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1958), p. 108; Long, II, 493-97.

⁴⁴Henry Coor, Parliamentary Papers, XCII (34), no. 745 (London: [n.n.], 1790-91), 90-91, cited by Brathwaite, p. 156.

as they were called, arose as testimony to this circumstance.⁴⁵

Jamaica's slave code, savage as it was about every black peccadillo, was strangely silent on the subject of blacks who fornicated with whites. Edward Long, no friend of the slave, felt that of all the vices that reigned on the island none was so flagrant as that of concubinage or cohabitation with Negro slaves. In denouncing the practice Long aptly described the attraction, as well as the effect of the Jamaican way of life upon white immigrants:

In a place where, by custom, so little restraint is laid on the passions, the Europeans, who at home have always been used to greater purity and strictness of manners, are too easily led aside to give a loose to every kind of sensual delight. . . .⁴⁶

Many were the men of rank, quality, and degree, Long asserted, who preferred to "riot" in the "goatish embraces" of their Negro slaves rather than to enter into marriage with one of their own race.⁴⁷ One eighteenth-century visitor to the island noted that planters possessed "as many sable wives as they please, and change them as often as they

⁴⁵Salley, (ed.), Records in the British Public Record Office V, 203; Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), p. 285; Long, II, 435; S. Hurwitz and J. Hurwitz, p. 65.

⁴⁶Dunn, p. 253; Long, II, 328.

⁴⁷Long, II, 328.

please. . . ." ⁴⁸ The plantation became an exotic, upside-down world ruled by a combination of force and passion.

So accepted was the practice of miscegenation in Jamaica that anyone who presumed to show displeasure against the custom was considered a "simple blockhead." ⁴⁹ Not one in twenty, according to Long, could be persuaded to quit these liaisons. Mulatto offspring were claimed by their married fathers and reared with their white half-brothers and sisters in the same house. "Habit . . . and the prevailing fashion," wrote Long, "reconcile such scenes, and lessen the abhorrence excited by their first impression." ⁵⁰

Fathers apparently were not without compassion for what was called their "tarnished" progeny. ⁵¹ Mulatto children often received the finest of English educations and were endowed with considerable sums of money or land. William Bonner, having fathered four mulatto offspring, upon his death in 1714, freed their mothers and bequeathed to the children one hundred acres of his best land together

⁴⁸ Robert Charles Dallas, The History of The Maroons: From Their Origin To The Establishment of their Chief Tribe at Sierra Leone including the Expedition to Cuba for the Purpose of Procuring Spanish Chasseurs and the State of the Island of Jamaica for the Last Ten Years with a Succinct History of the Island previous to that period, I (2nd ed.; London: Frank Cass and Co., 1968), 127.

⁴⁹ Long, II, 328. ⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 330.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 328.

with twenty of his Negro slaves. Jacobb Ricketts, another Jamaica gentleman, granted two hundred pounds to a mulatto son; then he considered what to do about "the Child my Negro Ancilla is now Big with," and decided that this baby, if a mulatto, should be freed and given one hundred pounds at age twenty-one!⁵²

The passion of lust was no stranger to South Carolina. The press made frequent and often jesting remarks on the desirability of female slaves. Published in the South Carolina Gazette in 1736 was some "frank" advise to the white males of Charlestown. The paper assured:

If they are in a Strait for Women, to wait for the next Shipping from the Coast Of Guinny. Those ladies are of a strong, robust Constitution; not easily jaded out, able to serve . . . by Night as well as Day."⁵³

Another contributor to the Gazette, who remained anonymous, declared miscegenation not of his liking and described himself as one of those "not a little fired at any Instance of this Kind. . . ."⁵⁴ He went on to note, however, that:

It is too well known, that I need not be under any great Apprehension of pointing at One Man only. Were that the Case, he would not be worth our Notice, and we might silently condemn both the Offence and Offender. But it is too shocking to see an Evil of of this Kind, spreading it self among us.⁵⁵

⁵²Abstracts of Wills Proved in Jamaica, 1625-1792, British Museum Additional Manuscripts, Class 34181, Vol. CCLLII, 334, cited by Dunn, p. 254.

⁵³South Carolina Gazette, July 17, 1736, cited by Jordan, p. 146.

⁵⁴Ibid., March 18, 1732, cited by Ibid. ⁵⁵Ibid.

Unions between persons of two races were not displayed as openly as in Jamaica. A Jamaican visitor to the rice coast wrote: "I know of but one Gentleman who professedly keeps a Mulatto Mistress and he is very much pointed at."⁵⁶ Yet he added reassuringly:

There are swarms of Negroes about the Town [Charlestown] and many Mulattoes, and by the Dress of the Girls, who mostly imitate their Mistresses, I have no doubt of their conversations with the whites, but they are carried on with more privacy than in our W. India Islands.⁵⁷

If interracial liasons in South Carolina were more secretive affairs than those of Jamaica there is no evidence to suggest they were less frequent nor less appreciated. Josiah Quincy Jr. of Boston reported on his journey through the Carolinas that the enjoyment of a Negro or mulatto woman was spoken of as a common thing, "no reluctance, delicacy or shame is made about the matter."⁵⁸

The demand by planters for Negro slaves in colonial South Carolina and Jamaica was immense. Criticism of racial slavery in either colony was all but nonexistent. In South Carolina Henry Laurens, a slaveholder in his own right, stood virtually alone in expressing hope for its eventual

⁵⁶G. Moulton to ?, Charlestown, January 23, 1773, British Museum Additional Manuscripts, Class 22677, 75, cited by Ibid., p. 145.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Mark Anthoney DeWolfe Howe (ed.), "Journal of Josiah Quincy, Junior, 1773," Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings, XXXIX ([n.p.], [n.n.], 1915-16), 463, cited by Ibid.

dissolution. Writing to a friend on the subject of slavery, Laurens examined the effects of the labor system upon his colony:

Your observation upon the influence and effect of Negro Slavery upon the morals and practices of young people are but too justly founded and I have often reflected with much concern on the same subject and wished that our oeconomy [sic] and government differ'd from the present. . . .⁵⁹

Giving the reasons for this condition, however, Laurens found little reason to expect an abandonment of slavery. He wrote:

Alass--since our constitution is as it is, what can individuals do? If it was to happen that every body or even a considerable majority of people were to change their sentiments with respects to slavery and that they should seriously think of . . . a more profitable event than ading [sic] House to House and laying Field to Field . . . those laws which now authorize the custom would be instantly abrogated or die of themselves. . . .⁶⁰

Negro slavery, however, was not destined to be abrogated nor destroyed by its own accord in either South Carolina or Jamaica. On the contrary, the colonies took on ever increasing numbers of blacks as the planters, corrupted by their greed, sought to enhance their holdings and position in life. When sugar magnates searched out the "Guinea yards" and Carolina rice planters "came to collaring and very nearly to Blows," in quest of slaves, they sought more than black laborers; they sought wealth, power, sex, and social

⁵⁹Henry Laurens to John Ettwein, March 19, 1763, Hamer (ed.), III, 373-74.

⁶⁰Ibid.

standing, goals that had moved men throughout history.⁶¹
To the planters of Jamaica and South Carolina the Negro
slave was the embodiment of all this.

⁶¹See footnotes 8 and 17.

CHAPTER II

VIOLENCE AND FEAR

As planters in Jamaica and South Carolina scrambled for slaves at a near hectic pace, there evolved paradoxically a sense of fear, even terror, toward the blacks they so eagerly sought. The Negro slave, a symbol and source of wealth and power, became also a threat to the slaveholder's very existence. Black laborers became an "intestine enemy" that might rise up and destroy their masters in all the bloody horror imaginable.¹ The threat of racial conflict hung like a specter over each colony, and the apprehension generated by it affected fundamentally the planters' way of life.

The slaveholder's fears stemmed initially from the great disproportion in numbers between the races. As early as 1709 not above 2,500 white men fit to bear arms inhabited Jamaica with at least 40,000 Negro slaves. This condition effected a sense of insecurity upon white islanders that remained throughout the colonial era. In 1747 it prompted Governor Edward Trelawny to remark that almost every evil from which the island suffered related ultimately to the small white population. So great was the racial imbalance by the

¹Edward Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, p. 192; David Duncan Wallace, History of South Carolina, p. 218.

later eighteenth century that two hundred Negroes inhabiting a plantation with only eight or nine whites had become a common sight.²

In South Carolina slaveholders shared the same apprehension felt by the sugar planters. In the maze of rivers, swamps, and islands along South Carolina's coast planters built estates where one white family was brought together with scores of blacks. The result compelled one government official to announce that Carolina wanted nothing so much as white inhabitants and by 1734 caused slave holders to compare anxiously the size of the militia with their number of slaves. It was realized that no more than 3,500 militiamen in South Carolina and Georgia combined could be mustered against a Negro population of at least 22,000.³

The planters in each colony were outnumbered heavily, perhaps hopelessly, by their slaves. Many of the Africans derived from tribes with a militarist tradition and they would not easily acquiesce to their new status. Whites who forged a living from slave labor found themselves inhabiting

²Colonel Laws to Board of Trade, August 11, 1709, Great Britain Board of Trade, Journal of the Commissioners For Trade and Plantations, II (2nd ed.; Nendeln, Leichenstein: Kraus Reprint, Draus - Thompson Organization LTD, 1969), 63; Samuel J. Hurwitz and Edith F. Hurwitz, Jamaica, pp. 26-27; Bryan Edwards, The History of the British Colonies in the West Indies, II (3rd ed.; London: Lincoln's - Inn Fields, 1801), 299.

³Robert Johnson to Mr. Popple, December 19, 1729, W. Noel Sainsbury (ed.), Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, XXXVI (2nd ed.; Washington: Microcard Editions Inc., 1965), 564; Alexander Hewatt, An Historical Account of SOUTH CAROLINA and GEORGIA, ed. Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, Vol. II, Historical Collections of South Carolina, p. 31.

a tinderbox for social upheaval. Commenting on their dilemma, South Carolina assemblymen wrote:

We bewailed our peculiar Case that we could not enjoy the Benefits of Peace like the rest of Mankind and that our . . . [slaves] should be the Means of taking from us all the Sweets of Life and of rendering us liable to the Loss of our Lives and Fortunes.⁴

The same might have been said of Jamaica. Unfortunately for the planters in each colony, concern for their "Lives" and their "Fortunes" was not unwarranted.

In 1685 Jamaica witnessed its first major racial disturbance when more than 250 Negroes rose in revolt on the island's north side. Arming themselves, they marched south, recruiting slaves from other plantations along the way. At one estate more than one hundred blacks joined them. Seizing weapons, the new recruits succeeded in killing fifteen of the plantation's seventeen whites. Thereafter, the rebels dispersed into small bands and slipped into the mountainous interior where many eluded capture for over a year.⁵ The revolt, though violent and bloody, was not long unique. By

⁴Robert Charles Dallas, The History of The Maroons, I 29; "The Report of the Committee of both Houses of Assembly of the Province of South Carolina appointed to Enquire into the Causes of the Disappointment of Success in the late Expedition against St. Augustine Under the Command of General Oglethorpe," The St. Augustine Expedition of 1740: A Report to the South Carolina Assembly (2nd ed.; Columbia: The State Commercial Printing Co., 1954), p. 9.

⁵Hender Molesworth to William Blathwayt, August 29, 1685, Sainsbury (ed.), XII, 82-83; John Taylor, Multum in Parvo or Parvum in Multo. Taylor's second part of the Historie of his life and Travels in AMERICA, Containing a full Geographical description of the Island of Jamaica . . . under the government of his Grace Christopher Duke of Albemarle. (MSS in Institute of Jamaica, Kingston), pp. 548-52, cited by Richard S. Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, pp. 260-61.

the eighteenth century it was considered merely a part of the Jamaican way of life. The magnitude and frequency of slave rebellions in Jamaica was unmatched by any other English colony; in the eighteenth century alone islanders suffered more than a dozen major outbreaks and scores of minor clashes. The colony's reputation as the most violent province in the Empire was well deserved, and it was in no small way attributable to its racial discord.⁶

South Carolina, though marked by less turmoil, had its moments of bloody grief.⁷ In 1739 blacks along South Carolina's Stono River, twenty miles from Charlestown, rose up against their white masters. They armed themselves, killed twenty-three whites, and marched south destroying every building in their path. Soon the blacks encountered militiamen, and in an engagement where one party "fought for Liberty and Life," and the other for "Country and every Thing that was dear to them," the revolt was crushed.⁸

The planters reacted to these revolts like the powerful but terrified minority they were. Whites struck back with a terrible vengeance; to rebel and be apprehended

⁶Dunn, p. 149.

⁷Slave revolts, though not uncommon in South Carolina, were decidedly smaller affairs than outbreaks in Jamaica and were marked by less destruction and bloodshed. Columbia University (ed.), Studies In History, Economics and Public Law, Number 501, Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave revolts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), pp. 171, 176, 181, 816.

⁸Wallace, p. 185; "Report of the Committee," p. 8.

meant a cruel death. Of the Stono rebels in South Carolina, at least fifty were killed or executed. In the Jamaica revolt of 1685 every black participant was ultimately killed--burned alive, torn by dogs, or drawn and quartered.⁹ Violence perpetrated by fear became a central theme in the slaveholder's character.

In a slave revolt only five miles from Jamaica's capitol, Spanish Town, Negroes killed several whites including the mistress of an estate. Her tombstone described the event as the planters perceived it:

UNDER THIS STONE LYETH THE BODYES OF EDMON DUCKE
ESQ. AND MARTHA HIS WIFE, SHE BEING MOST BARBAROUSLY
MURTERED BY SOME OF THEIR OWNE NEGRO SLAVES. . . .¹⁰

The woman's plight, though horrendous, was certainly avenged. A number of Mrs. Ducke's slaves were quickly apprehended and put to death. An overseer from a nearby plantation described one execution:

His legs and arms was first broken in pieces with stakes, after which he was fasten'd upon his back to the Ground--a fire was made first to his feete and burn'd uppe by degrees; I heard him speak several words when the fire consum'd all his lower parts as far as his Navil. The fire was upon his breast (he was burning neer 3 houres) before he dy'd.¹¹

⁹South Carolina Historical Commission, Council Journal, Manuscript. VII (Columbia: [n.n.], [n.d.]), 189, 217, cited by Aptheker, p. 189; J. Taylor MSS. cited by Dunn, 260-61.

¹⁰Dunn, p. 260.

¹¹Joseph Bryan to William Heyler, June 8, 1678, Heyler Manuscripts University of Texas (J. Harry Bennett Collection, microfilm), cited by Dunn, p. 260.

Alone on their estates with huge numbers of blacks, the planters dealt out swift and terrible punishment to any slave who threatened their security. So vulnerable was the white man's position, it was feared, the most complete subordination of slaves was necessary; leniency, it was believed, courted disaster.¹² To serve as a warning to other blacks and to reassure the white man that he remained in control, punishment for unruly slaves was often made a public spectacle. Following one severe slave revolt in Jamaica, two rebel leaders were hung up in irons at Kingston where they remained until they starved. In 1741, with the disturbance at Stono fresh in their minds, South Carolina whites publicly burned to death a slave who confessed to the arson of a dwelling.¹³

Never renowned for its beneficence, eighteenth-century colonial justice stood at its most brutal when applied to Negro slaves. Every offense punished in England by branding the hand, for example, was doled out to the Carolina slaves by burning the letter 'R' into the forehead. In South Carolina striking a white resulted in a severe flogging and the loss of the slave's ears. In Jamaica, theft, rebellion, vandalism, or striking one's master generally meant death, deportation, or dismemberment. The murder of a

¹²Edward Long, The History of Jamaica II, 443, 503.

¹³Edwards, II, 78-79; South Carolina Gazette, August 15, 1741, cited by Edward McCrady, "Slavery In The Province Of South Carolina 1670-1770," p. 659.

white in either community legally called for death by fire to the offender.¹⁴

Neither was the fear of blacks manifested solely by violent group behavior and harsh legal codes. The presence of so many blacks contributed to strict and sometimes brutal conduct by slaveholders on the plantation. "With arbitrary will and adamant hearts," wrote Dr. Alexander Hewatt of South Carolina, "planters on their estates disciplined slaves for the most trifling offenses." With the whip blacks were herded about and managed through their tasks. If they fled from the estate, they were hunted down or shot like "wild beasts."¹⁵

The very nature of the plantation system encouraged the development of a man of violent action. When not tending to their slaves or their lands, both rice and sugar planters busied themselves growing adept at arms and horsemanship. Commenting on this condition, one South Carolinian wrote:

Their [the planter's] rural life and the constant use of arms, promoted a kind of martial spirit among them, and the great dangers to which they were always exposed, habituated them to face an enemy [their slaves] with resolution.¹⁶

More than sport or the social graces was involved in hunting fox in South Carolina's pine barrens or wild boar in the

¹⁴Thomas Cooper and David McCord (eds.), The Statutes at Large of South Carolina III, 621, cited by McCrady "Slavery," pp. 648-49; Long, II, 485.

¹⁵Hewatt, II, ed. Carroll, 349-50.

¹⁶Ibid., 508.

Blue Mountains of Jamaica. Fear of the black hosts prompted the planters in each colony to develop soldier-like qualities.

Jamaicans and Carolinians were also concerned with their position as colonists in the highly contested New World and its effect upon the slaves. Throughout most of its colonial history, South Carolina stood as a barrier between the English continental colonies to the north and the Spanish and French to the south and west. Similarly, Jamaica loomed large as a target or a prize in the most fought over sector of colonial America. While the French in Haiti lay 125 miles from Jamaica and the Spanish in Cuba were even nearer, the only English colony of consequence was 1,000 miles away.¹⁷ Removed by days, even weeks from the aid of other English colonies, South Carolina and Jamaica were colonial outposts susceptible to much disruption. Foreign rivals for empire found a natural ally in the Jamaica and South Carolina "intestine enemy."

In 1733 an edict from the Spanish in St. Augustine promised freedom to all slaves who made their way to Florida from the English colonies. Thereafter slaves in considerable numbers fled south, taking with them horses or boats, and occasionally killing their masters before they escaped. In Florida, they were formed into a military regiment, complete

¹⁷ Edward McCrady, The History of South Carolina under The Proprietary Government, p. 4; Ulrich Bonnell Phillips American Negro Slavery, p. 49; Map of "Cuba and the West Indies," The World Book Encyclopedia, III (Chicago: Field Enterprises Inc., 1957), 1816-17.

with their own black officers, paid and clothed as other soldiers, and trained for the purpose of invading South Carolina. So unsettling were these circumstances that Governor James Glen announced, "Unless a stop be put to this Practice it may . . . prove . . . destructive to the Province."¹⁸

To meet this threat Carolinians reacted with characteristic vigor. Spaniards found within the colony attempting to entice slaves to leave were put to death. Early in the eighteenth century garrisons were established at strategic points to prevent the continued exodus of Negroes to the south and ferries at river crossings were manned with at least one free white. By the 1750's even treaties were arranged with neighboring Indian tribes to return all fugitives in exchange for weapons and trinkets. As for the runaways, those apprehended faced a grisly fate from people who answered disobedience with violent reprisal. Punishment was extreme; female runaways lost their ears; runaway males were castrated.¹⁹

Fear of runaways permeated the minds of Carolinians, for escaped slaves were viewed as desperate criminals who

¹⁸Hewatt, II, ed. Carroll, 331-32; James Glen to South Carolina Assembly, November 23, 1749, James Harold Easterby (ed.), Journal of the Commons House of Assembly (Columbia: [n.n.], 1951-62), p. 286, cited by Elise Pinckney (ed.), The Letterbook of Eliza Pinckney 1739-1762 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 57.

¹⁹Hewatt, II, Carroll, 331; Cooper and McCord (eds.), III, 621, cited by McCrady, "Slavery," pp. 636, 649; David Ramsay, History of South Carolina I, 57, 76; Frank Klingberg An Appraisal of the Negro in South Carolina, p. 21.

would stop at nothing to win their freedom. White colonists, in consequence, strove mightily to curtail this threat and in doing so made manifest the depths of their concern. The colonial assembly, the mouth piece of the planter interests, probably spoke for most whites on the subject of runaways when it wrote:

Evil brought home to us within our very Doors awakened the Attention of the most Unthinking. Every one that had . . . a Life to lose were in the most sensible Manner shocked at such Danger daily hanging over their Heads.²⁰

Jamaican sugar planters were no less apprehensive about escape by their slaves to nearby French or Spanish islands. Freedom for blacks lay no further away than a stolen boat and a night's journey to Cuba. Unlike the English colonies, Negroes in the Spanish Empire were permitted to work out their freedom like indentured servants. The result was the flight of scores, sometimes hundreds, of slaves annually from Jamaica's north shore. One cove along Jamaica's coast grew so infamous as a point of embarkation that it was styled "Runaway Bay."²¹

To remedy this circumstance the sugar planters reacted like their counterparts in South Carolina. Island fugitives were punished initially by the loss of their toes, and later by branding the letter 'F' into their foreheads

²⁰"Report of the Committee," p. 9.

²¹Long, II, 85-89; Map by Gilbert Grosvenor (ed.), "West Indies," The National Geographic Magazine CV, no. 3 (Washington: National Geographic Society, March, 1954).

and fitting them with multi-pronged iron yokes that hindered further escape. All slaves were to carry passes signed by their masters when away from the plantation, and black freedmen who might wander about the island were required to wear upon their shoulder a blue cross signifying their status.²²

The sugar planters' efforts to discourage runaways met with limited success, however. If blacks could not make their way to foreign islands they could always slip into Jamaica's wild interior. Nearly the size of Connecticut and bisected by rugged mountains covered with thick tropical foliage, the center of Jamaica provided a haven for obstinate Negroes who would not submit to slavery.²³ In all the English colonies the condition, as well as its result, was unique. Organizing into communities of formidable hunters and ferocious warriors, these blacks, called Maroons, became what seemed to the planters a fearful threat.²⁴ White Jamaicans were to expend nearly £250,000, pass 44 acts, and engage in over 80 years of irregular warfare in a vain effort to destroy them.²⁵

²²Long, II, 321, 485, 494-95; Dunn, p. 243.

²³Frank Wesley Pitman, The Development of the British West Indies, p. 374.

²⁴Slaves in South Carolina occasionally fled into the swamps where they bound together with other runaways. Yet these fugitives presented nothing like the threat posed by the Maroons of Jamaica. David Duncan Wallace, The History of South Carolina, I (New York: [n.n.], 1934), 374, cited by Aptheker, p. 197.

²⁵Long, II, 340.

In 1656, the year Britain seized Jamaica from Spain, Major-General Robert Sedgewick predicted that the Spaniards' Negro slaves who had fled to the interior would prove "a thorn in the sides of the English."²⁶ The words proved prophetic. Of a number of English settlers who arrived that year from other colonies with intentions to settle, not one chose to remain. Continually on watch, the Maroons wreaked havoc upon anyone who ventured away from the security of coastal settlements. For years fear of the Maroons retarded inland settlement, and even when pioneers finally established themselves away from the coast, they were forced to build homes that resembled frontier dwellings on the continent. One dwelling in the province of Westmoreland, constructed of stone and fortified with flankers, possessed loopholes for musketry and a battery of six nine-pound field pieces.²⁷ On the island's north side the few planters lived in a continual state of alarm against murder, theft, plunder, or the loss of their own blacks to the Maroons.

Because of Maroon depredations, and because they became a rallying point to every slave inclined to change his state, concerted efforts were developed by the government to crush these enemies from the interior. Militiamen, free blacks, Mosquito Indians from Honduras, and regiments of British regulars were employed in what became a costly,

²⁶ Edwards, I, 522. ²⁷ Long, I, 251; II, 192.

eighty-year conflict known as the Maroon War.²⁸ During the war, one colonist declared: "The inhabitants were . . . kept almost perpetually in arms to oppose the Maroons, who destroyed many infant settlements, and hindered others from being formed." Through the long conflict, he noted, the number of whites never rose above eight or nine thousand.²⁹

The white inhabitants marshalled all their strength and resources to eliminate the Maroons. Through bitter experience, however, they came to realize that not even crack British troops assured victory. Adept at stalking and fighting in the jungles, and possessed of an extraordinary leader named Cudjoe, the Maroons became virtually invincible.

In the early years of English settlement plunder had motivated the Maroons to war. Upon being pursued and attacked by government expeditions, however, they grew obsessed with revenge. By the 1730's, under Cudjoe's leadership, a regular system of guerilla warfare against outlying plantations began. Taking no prisoners, the Maroons waited in ambush, disguised with leaves from head to foot. The surprise of their attacks and their accurate shooting usually meant quick victory. If pressed, they simply fell back deeper into the woods to re-form. Time and again government expeditions failed in their efforts to crush the Maroons. British regulars and Jamaica militiamen

²⁸Dallas, I, 26-29, 37-38. ²⁹Long, II, 318.

entered many furious battles that ended in bloody retreat. On one occasion two hundred British soldiers supported by militia marched upon a Maroon village in the mountains only to be ambushed and thrown back with heavy losses and in complete panic.³⁰

The Maroons' achievements were extraordinary to say the least. Vastly outnumbered and without fresh supplies, these blacks ultimately secured a peace that not only granted them freedom but also recognition as a kind of autonomous nation within Jamaica. No less spectacular, however, was the effect of the Maroons upon the thinking of the white islanders. These blacks were feared out of all proportion to their capacity to do harm. In the final war years of the 1730's the government estimated that two thousand rebels inhabited the island when actually their numbers were below a thousand. Fewer than six hundred blacks survived to witness peace in 1738.³¹ Planters expressed their concern in legislation, commenting (though incorrectly) on how the Maroon's numbers had greatly increased, "to the great terror of His Majesty's subjects. . . ."³²

The Maroons dealt a staggering blow to the morale of English Jamaicans. In a colony that subscribed to the concept of white supremacy the continued success of the Maroons

³⁰Dallas, I, 33-34, 39, 46, 69; Clinton Black, History of Jamaica, pp. 84-86.

³¹Long, I, 124; Pitman, p. 116; Dallas, I, 120.

³²Edwards, I, 526-27.

was difficult to explain. Moreover, the effect of the Maroons upon the great slave population was terribly disquieting. At the height of the Maroon War it was noted that where previously the presence of five whites served to frighten fifteen blacks, the reverse was now true.³³ The sugar planters damned the Maroons and called them wild, despicable, or treacherous. Seldom, however, were these rebels, or for that matter blacks in general, considered cowardly or submissive. The Maroons instilled in the planter's minds a sense of fear and mystery toward blacks not encountered in other British colonies. The description of Cudjoe at the ceremonial treaty concluding the Maroon War aptly depicts the ferocious sort with which Jamaicans dealt. He was described as short but very broad, with a large lump of flesh on his back and possessed of a strange wild manner. He carried a long musket, a powder horn, a bag of shot, and a machete under his arm.³⁴ The "Sambo" image pinned on blacks in continental America never took root in Jamaica.

Plagued by runaways and foreign intruders, susceptible to slave uprisings, and, in Jamaica, to deprivations by the Maroons as well, neither the island colony nor the rice coast could maintain the orthodox lifestyles of such slaveholding communities as Virginia or Maryland. The great sugar

³³Mr. Guy to Board of Trade, November 26, 1734, Great Britain, VI, 420.

³⁴Dallas, I, 53-54.

magnate for all his wealth and power might lose everything, including his life in one swift assault by the Maroons. On the rice coast any slave might cut and run for Florida. In the frontier settlements of Jamaica and South Carolina, absolute calamity was a constant danger to the tiny free population, and neither brutal laws nor their vigorous enforcement altered this circumstance.

In an atmosphere charged with the potential for calamity the most unfounded suspicions were often circulated as truth. Following a particularly bloody insurrection in Jamaica in 1761, it was said that the leader of the rebels had desired the lieutenant-governor's wife for his concubine. Though peace returned to the island, it was realized that many rebels slipped back to their plantations only when the revolt failed, claiming all along that they had helped suppress the disturbance. As a consequence, the mood in Jamaica remained uneasy and the dying threat of a captured rebel never to trust any of his countrymen remained in the mind of at least one planter ten years after it was spoken.³⁵

Wild rumors passed among whites were occasionally significant in their effect. Soon after the 1739 disturbance at Stono, South Carolina, outbreaks were projected for Charlestown and various regions of the plantation district. Though totally erroneous, the rumors prompted authorities to

³⁵Long, II, 457, 472.

send rangers to patrol South Carolina's frontiers and block all passages of escape for the rebels. Moreover Lieutenant Governor William Bull sent word to General James Oglethorpe of Georgia of the threat and advised him to seize all straggling blacks. Three years later the famed horticulturist Eliza Lucas addressed a concerned friend about a similar circumstance. She wrote:

The last time I had the pleasure of being with you, you seemed under fearful apprehensions for the Consequence of Mr. Bryan's prophecy, which induces me to acquaint you with the agreeable news of his being convinced of his error.³⁶

Mr. Hugh Bryan had prophesied, to the colony's great alarm, that slaves in South Carolina would revolt and win their freedom. He later apologized for his comments, when his prediction failed to develop and a grand jury prepared to bring charges against him.³⁷

Waves of terror seem to have gripped South Carolina especially hard from time to time. In a letter to a business colleague Henry Laurens spoke of a "most horrible Insurrection" intended by the Negroes.³⁸ The rumor, though just that, and called by Governor Glen "this Hellish Forgery,"

³⁶ Andrew Leslie to Philip Bearcroft, January 7, 1739, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Manuscripts, B7, Part II, 243, cited by Klingberg, p. 80; Ramsay, I, 62-63; Wallace, p. 185; Eliza Lucas to Elizabeth Chessman, March, 1742, Pinckney (ed.), pp. 27-28.

³⁷ Easterby (ed.), pp. 461-62, cited by Pinckney (ed.), p. 28.

³⁸ Henry Laurens to James Cowles, March 21, 1748, Philip M. Hamer (ed.), The Papers of Henry Laurens I, 229.

caused the government to call out the militia and interrogate numbers of accused conspirators before tensions were relieved.³⁹ In 1765 a general insurrection was so feared that friendly Indians were brought to the rice coast to terrorize the slaves while whites in the back-country were placed on alert to be ready to march. The temper of the times can be no better illustrated than by the response to the Cherokee Indian War of the mid-eighteenth century. Half of the militia was prepared to march upon the Cherokees at an hour's warning while the other half was to remain and guard the "intestine enemy" of the plantations.⁴⁰

To soothe their fears and to make safe their lives, both rice and sugar planters placed their slaves under a rigid network of controls. Not only were obstinate Negroes severely disciplined, but blacks in general were regimented in a manner that often denied them the most insignificant personal liberties. When not in the field, most slaves spent their waking hours working their provision grounds or fraternizing with other slaves in the "Negro quarters." In neither colony were slaves permitted to leave the plantation without a pass from their master. Away from the estate, blacks were subject to questioning and search by any white

³⁹South Carolina Council Journal, No. 17, Part I ([n.p.] : [n.n.], 1748-49), 47-169, cited by Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.; Alexander Garden to David Humphries, October 31, 1759; S.P.G. MSS., B4, No. 284, cited by Klingberg, p. 94.

they encountered. In South Carolina no more than seven blacks were permitted to travel roads without the accompaniment of a white, and after the Stono incident Carolina slaves could no longer be taught to write. In Jamaica slaves were denied the possession of drums, liquors, and musical instruments and by the latter eighteenth century island blacks could not even assemble on holidays for sporting events.⁴¹

The absolute control of blacks also served to curtail drastically their number of personal possessions. Negroes were to look as well as act subordinate. Annually, planters issued to their slaves jackets, drawers, and if female, petticoats. On some plantations blacks received coats, hats, handkerchiefs, aprons, needles, pipes, and tobacco, but little else found its way into the hands of slaves. Inhabiting dirt-floor huts equipped with the most rudimentary furnishings, theirs was a spartan existence. No slave, of course, could possess guns or any other weapon without his master's consent. In Jamaica bondsmen were also denied the privilege to own horses or mules; riding was a mark of distinction.⁴²

The planters' subjugation of slaves made their colonies often appear as quasi-military states. Ever cognizant of the potential for catastrophe, the white minorities

⁴¹Long, II, 443-487; Cooper and McCord (eds.), VII, 408, cited by Phillips, Slavery, p. 492.

⁴²Long, II, 489, 490, 498; Dallas, I, p. cix.

built paramilitary societies dedicated to the suppression or control of the black masses' every activity. In Jamaica the foremost symbols of the militarist tradition were British troops. Though financially a burden, the presence of these soldiers was considered imperative to the sugar planters' security. "The men of property in this island," wrote one Jamaican, "pay ample contribution, in order that it may be protected, not so much from French and Spaniards, as against . . . the many thousands of slaves."⁴³ So unnerved was Governor Archibald Hamilton by the thought of troops returning to Britain that in 1715 he wrote: "should these Companies be recalled or broke, I shall not think my self safe where I am from the Negroes. . . ."⁴⁴ To the governor's delight troops not only remained but were reinforced. To quell revolts and to ward off the Maroons, garrisons manned by British troops were established throughout the island. Stationed periodically in Jamaica since inhabitation by the English, professional soldiers in the eighteenth century became a permanent fixture. Varying at times from a few companies to as many as several regiments, the soldiers' presence by 1768 was, financially at least, staggering. Of the colony's £38,000 total budget, £21,000 went to the supply and maintenance of these troops.⁴⁵

⁴³Ibid., 309.

⁴⁴Archibald Hamilton to Lovel Stanhope, November 14, 1715, Sainsbury (ed.), XXIX, 8.

⁴⁵Long, I, 60; II, 75, 204, 303, 309.

To these forces, the island government, in theory at least, added the local militia, which included all free Jamaicans fifteen to sixty years of age. The militia contained white officers and privates attended by one or two slaves, "Trusty Negro men," and unattended free blacks whose duty it was to search out the interior for runaways. Through the 1600's the force proved itself more than reliable, putting down revolts and repelling foreign invasions. In the following century, however, it was British troops rather than militiamen that increasingly provided defense against slaves. The militia degenerated considerably as commissions came to be valued for their prestige, and favoritism was granted in awarding them. The result weakened command and made inefficient the rank and file; so much so that in 1761 only one round of powder and ball was found among a whole company assembled to check an insurrection.⁴⁶

In South Carolina the militia rather than British troops carried fundamental responsibility for protecting the white community. And, if fear of slaves may be measured by the efforts employed to suppress them, the slaveholders of the rice coast were possessed of a terror found in no other English colony in North America. The Carolina planters so feared servile insurrection that their colony often took on the character of a military district. "Like those of

⁴⁶Ibid., I, 37, 123, 132, 138, 140; Black, pp. 74-75.

ancient Sparta," wrote Dr. Alexander Hewatt, South Carolinians, "joined the Military to the civil character."⁴⁷

In 1704 the Carolina assembly enacted laws that became the basis for all legislation in regard to slaves for more than 150 years. These statutes organized a military police, whose job it was to ride from plantation to plantation on occasions of alarm, seize slaves they met off their masters' estates and punish them. Under this system the colony was divided into military districts headed by militia captains. The captains were in direct control of the riding patrols, and were renowned for their discipline and vigilance. A Mr. Lawson of South Carolina described the colony's militia under their command as the finest in America.⁴⁸

All citizens of South Carolina became soldiers and by law were required to carry arms. As a result, Anglican ministers reported confidently that their parishioners assembled for church "with guns loaded."⁴⁹ By its fifth year, Charlestown had established a night watch and curfew that it maintained throughout the colonial era.⁵⁰ The rice coast in many respects came to resemble an armed camp.

⁴⁷Hewatt, I, ed. Carroll, 508.

⁴⁸McCrady, Proprietary Government, pp. 10, 357.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 357; John Fulton to David Humphries, December 4, 1730, S.P.G. MSS., A23, p. 222 cited by Klingberg, p. 76.

⁵⁰Ramsay, I, 70; Phillips, Slavery, p. 492.

Brutal laws and armed militiamen were not the only means employed to manage huge numbers of slaves. In each colony planters devised labor systems whose apparent intent was to regulate behavior as well as to foster agricultural production. The slaveholders approached perfection in arranging working conditions that made plantation labor constant. Any alternative was totally unacceptable, for idle slaves had time not only to contemplate their circumstance but to plan a way to alter it.

Typically, Jamaican sugar planters divided their land into three parts: one field lay fallow and was prepared by hoe for planting, another field containing sugar cane in its first year required weeding (canes needed sixteen months to mature), while a third tract with mature canes awaited harvesting. By so dividing their lands labor never ceased. As one crop was harvested, another was weeded, and a third planted. Dividing land and labor in this manner was unnecessary, but it eliminated the dilemma of removing from work great numbers of slaves for extended periods and made effective use of a permanent labor force. To have worked a plantation as a single field would have given months of free time to scores of slaves. Between planting and cutting seasons, many blacks would have been idle for more than a year.⁵¹

Equally well organized were the gangs who worked the fields. Planters divided their slaves into three groups.

⁵¹ Anon., American Husbandry, eds. Harry J. Carmen and Rexford G. Tugwell, pp. 412, 416-18; Edwards, II, 156.

The first and largest gang cleared ground, planted, and cut canes. The second gang, composed of youngsters, pregnant women, and convalescents, weeded the canes or did other light work.⁵² The third group, made up of children and attended usually by an old woman, was a sort of "kindergarten in slave labor" where youngsters performed gentle tasks to develop the work habit.⁵³

The labor system on South Carolina's rice coast matched the organization of Jamaica. Blacks received work according to their physical strength and labored at specific tasks to be completed before the end of each day. From March through May rice planters sowed their grain in furrows hoed by blacks. Weeded through the summer, the crop was harvested in August and September. Rice was then threshed, winnowed, ground, and pounded to free the grain from its chaff. Afterward broken grains were separated from whole ones by sifting. The entire process kept the slave population of a plantation busy until late autumn or early winter. In the time that remained before the next planting season, slaves cut lumber and constructed barrels to ship the rice crop to Charleston.⁵⁴

It is not unreasonable to assume that on the rice coast the desire to keep slaves occupied also resulted in

⁵²Edwards, II, 156-58.

⁵³Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, The Slave Economy of the Old South, ed. Eugene D. Genovese, p. 231.

⁵⁴Phillips, ed. Genovese, p. 193; Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), pp. 275-77.

establishing an additional money crop. Profits reaped from the cultivation of indigo explained only in part its popularity with slaveholders, for the crop grew best in the back country soils, not on the coast where it was planted extensively. Planted in early spring and cut in June or July, indigo occupied the slaves at a period when labor in the rice swamps was most slack. A plantation slave, fully employed, might tend indigo fields as well as rice swamps. The indigo plant was reported as thriving in Carolina as early as 1682, long before Eliza Lucas announced its suitability for the colony.⁵⁵ Most likely indigo failed to develop as a chief commodity in the seventeenth century because no great number of blacks were on hand. Carolina society in the 1600's did not yet require strict regimentation and a constant devotion by its slaves to labor. Indigo became a major export after the Stono Rebellion, and after the slave population reached the tens of thousands.

Antiquated agricultural methods to which the planters tenaciously clung also served to maintain order. New labor-saving techniques were luxuries the planters could ill afford. Horse-drawn plows, for instance, were shunned in each colony, though one plow turned up as much ground in the same time as one hundred Negroes with hoes. Substituting plows for hoes would have released great numbers of slaves from their tasks in the Carolina rice fields with relatively little to do.

⁵⁵Phillips, Slavery, p. 92; Augustine T. Smythe and others, The Carolina Low-Country, p. 72.

In Jamaica the planting gangs might have been placed with gangs weeding or harvesting; yet these chores by their nature were completed more rapidly than planting and the result would have ultimately been idle slaves.⁵⁶

Neither Jamaica nor South Carolina planters rejected new techniques in agriculture simply because they were different. New ways seem to have been ignored only when they threatened old social patterns. More efficient methods to crush the juice from canes were eagerly taken up by Jamaicans in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Carolinians soon learned to develop reservoir systems to flood their rice fields in periods of drouth.⁵⁷ Rice planters, however, refused to use the same water systems to weed their fields by periodic inundation, for the process would have released slave gangs from the tasks of weeding. Planters chose instead to send their slaves into the rice fields with hoe in hand for more than forty years after the process of weeding by inundation was realized.⁵⁸

Isolated in the New World, and heavily outnumbered by their slaves, the planters of Jamaica and South Carolina lived in justifiable fear for their lives. On the plantations blacks proved more than once that they were capable of

⁵⁶Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), p. 419; Long, I, 436, 440, 448.

⁵⁷Lowell Joseph Ragatz, The Fall Of The Planter Class, p. 62; Robert Meriwether, The Expansion of South Carolina 1729-1765 (Ringsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers Inc., 1940), p. 4.

⁵⁸Carmen and Tugwell (eds.), p. 326; Meriwether, p. 4.

bloody insurrection with calamitous results. In Jamaica planters weathered more slave revolts than any other colony in British America. Outside the plantation, planters faced circumstances that were equally threatening. Foreign communities lured away many slaves with the promise of freedom. In South Carolina, blacks fled to Spanish Florida; in Jamaica, they sought refuge at nearby Cuba and Haiti, or with organized Negro communities in Jamaica's interior. Whites in each colony were continually plagued with the threat of runaways, conspiracies, and even race war.

These dangers played upon the planters' minds and were manifested in the way they lived. Slaveholders became rugged men of violence, adept at weaponry, and willing to ply these skills on any slave who deviated from prescribed behavior. Ever conscious of the potential for catastrophe, the slaveholders became citizen soldiers; in South Carolina planters even formed into a military police. As if they had unearthed a coveted secret about the white man's vulnerability, slaves who challenged their master's authority were brutally suppressed. Laws were established and enforced that denied blacks the most basic and oftentimes the most insignificant personal liberties, and in the workday world of the plantation, slaveholders managed blacks by thoroughly organized labor systems. Negroes were kept at unending tasks lasting the year around in an effort to minimize their danger; idle slaves were potential conspirators.

The great planters of Jamaica and South Carolina were trapped. The mass of slaves necessary to sustain their way of living could at any moment rise up and destroy all they had known. It was an unnerving circumstance that became a part of the planter's way of life.

CHAPTER III

CONFLICTS IN RACE AND CULTURE

Closely related to the emotion of fear, and oftentimes as keenly felt, was the aversion whites displayed toward slaves. Planters despised the Negro masses with an ethnocentric contempt that was reflected in not only what they wrote but in the way they lived. The white race, in the planter's mind, became the symbol of culture and morality while the Negro represented ignorance and savagery, the antithesis of civilized man. As a consequence, English planters in both South Carolina and Jamaica isolated themselves from their slaves, clung to things European, and in general, attempted to protect their lives from African influence.

As Winthrop Jordan so aptly notes in White Over Black, the English colonist used their customs and their appearance--especially color--as a measuring stick for judging other peoples.¹ The planters of Jamaica and South Carolina were no different and, as a result, viewed their African slaves as inferior to themselves in almost every respect. One self-assured Carolinian, commenting on his color and his Maker wrote: "this Distinction of Colour, in our Complexion, from that other Part of his [God's] human Creatures, of the opposite Hue, may be considered concurrent Instance of his

¹Winthrop Jordan, White Over Black, pp. 4-11, 25.

Favour."² A Jamaican planter confidently asserted the same opinion when he declared that, "The Freedom of philosophic enquiry may still proceed to extirpate old prejudices, and display more and more . . . the beautiful gradation, order, and harmony, which pervade the whole series of created beings on this globe."³

At the pinnacle of all earthly existence stood the Englishman, or at least the white man; at the lowest human rung was the most unEuropean of creatures, the African Negro. Whites in each colony conceded differences in colors among Negroes; yet they hastened to add that the difference ascended from the blackest of persons to what one Jamaican described as the "utmost limit of perfection in the pure White."⁴ That so flattering a concept was popular with Englishmen is easily comprehensible. For the planters of Jamaica and South Carolina, it served to justify a way of life as well.

On the topic of Negroes and slavery, no one articulated the thinking of Jamaican planters better than Edward Long. A government official and member of the wealthiest planter family on the island, Long served more than once as a spokesman for the sugar magnates. In his most candid manner he frequently expressed his views on the nature of the African slave. Though conceding that blacks were of the

²South Carolina Gazette, March 18, 1732, cited by Ibid., p. 165.

³Edward Long, The History of Jamaica II, 337.

⁴Ibid., 375.

same genus, he categorized them in a different and inferior species. "In general," he wrote, "they are void of genius . . . and have no plan or system of morality among them . . . with no taste but for women; gormondizing, and drinking to excess. . . ." ⁵ The sugar planter delighted in comparing blacks with animals and, whenever possible, employed bestial terminology in describing them: the Negroes' hair was their "wool" or "fleece", their noses were flat like a "Dutch Dog's," and when eating, blacks tore savagely at their meat with their "talons." African tribes he styled herds, and mulattoes were called mongrels. ⁶

Long gave credence to the most stereotyped of images that concerned blacks. At childbirth, he wrote, Negro females delivered more easily than white women, and mulattoes, he asserted, were "of the mule kind," and incapable of reproducing from one another. ⁷ He also seized upon the most fabricated tales of African voyagers in an effort to belittle blacks. Orangutans, he noted, were said to converse in a sort of hissing dialect, build huts for shelter, and even mate with Negro women. One female orangutan supposedly bound her head with a scarf! "Ludicrous as the opinion may seem," Long concluded, "I do not think that an orangutan husband would be any dishonor to an Hottentot female." ⁸

⁵Ibid., 353, 356. ⁶Ibid., 49, 335, 352-53, 364, 383.

⁷Ibid., 335, 380. ⁸Ibid., 360-61, 64.

Undoubtedly, men such as Long who spoke harshly of blacks were defending a lifestyle as much as they were expressing an opinion. By the mid-eighteenth century much humanitarian and abolitionist sentiment was in the air and it was, therefore, impossible to know precisely how planters felt about their slaves. In a moment of introspection Long admitted this; he noted that planters did not want to be told that blacks were their equal: "If they believe them to be of human kind, they cannot regard them . . . as no better than dogs or horses."⁹ Yet if this revelation said something for the intellectual integrity of Edward Long, it also shed light upon the attitude of planters and the plight of their slaves. Blacks were considered animals, even in light of contrary evidence.

Probably most planters considered blacks innately inferior; virtually all believed them to be uncivilized. White masters refused to recognize any semblance of a culture among African slaves; their music was dismissed as noise, and their dancing was considered a kind of sexual debauchery.¹⁰ If the slaves were not beasts, they were at least barbarians. "The ideas of laziness, vice, blackness and slavery are so blended, so twisted together in their

⁹Ibid., I, vii; II, 270.

¹⁰Bryan Edwards, The History of The British Colonies in the West Indies II, 106; O. F. Christie (ed.), The Diary of the Rev. William Jones, 1777-1821 (London: [n.n.] 1929), p. 12, cited by Edward Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, p. 220.

minds," wrote one critic of the sugar planters, "that they may be supposed as utterly incapable of separating them."¹¹

South Carolina slaveholders were no less vehement in denouncing blacks. From its early beginnings degrading, stereotyped images of blacks were found in Carolina. Captain Henry Brayne in 1670 was reputed to have owned "a lusty negro man."¹² In 1709 Reverend Francis Le Jau complained that he could not prevail upon the planters to make a difference between their slaves and their beasts.¹³ Probably the preamble to the colony's slave code best described the attitudes of Carolina slaveholders. A general statement written by planters, it denounced blacks as "naturally" prone to "Disorder, Rapines, and Inhumanity." Moreover, the document depicted Negroes as "barbarous, wild, savage, and wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws and customs of Whites."¹⁴

Carolina planters, like their counterparts in Jamaica, also delighted in comparing Negroes with animals. With a wry

¹¹David Cooper, A Serious Address to the Rulers of America on the Inconsistency of Their Conduct Respecting Slavery. . . . (Trenton: [n.n.], 1783), p. 7, cited by Jordan, p. 280.

¹²David Duncan Wallace, South Carolina, p. 31.

¹³Francis Le Jau to John Chamberlayne, March 22, 1709, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Manuscripts, A4, No. cxlii, cited by Frank Klingberg, An Appraisal of the Negro In Colonial South Carolina, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴David Cooper and Thomas McCord (eds.), The Statutes at Large of South Carolina VII, p. 343, cited by Edward McCrady, "Slavery In The Province of South Carolina," p. 646.

bit of humor one slaveholder so advertised his feelings in the local newspaper:

Whereas a stately Baboon hath lately slipp'd his Collar and run away; He is big-bond, full in Flesh, and has learn'd to walk very erect on his two Hind-Legs, he grins and chatters much, but will not bite, he plays Tricks impudently well, and is mightily given to clambering, whereby he often shews his A---."15

The development of crude jokes and racist theories were not the limits to the slaveholders' ethnocentric energies, however. Surrounded and outnumbered by their slaves, both sugar and rice planters grew concerned for the destiny of their own race. The potential for racial or cultural assimilation into the black masses was as great as the threat of insurrection. This notion haunted whites in each colony, and they reacted to it by establishing a lifestyle they hoped would insure the survival of their race.

To maintain their coherence whites in South Carolina and Jamaica divided labor along racial lines. European colonists made up the artificers, planters, merchants, or independent farmers of their respective communities. Negro slaves filled servile positions such as household domestics or field laborers.¹⁶ This condition categorized labor racially and guarded the occupations of free inhabitants from encroachment by Negro slaves. White indentured servants could have

¹⁵South Carolina Gazette, May 4, 1734, cited by Jordan, p. 238.

¹⁶Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, The Slave Economy of the Old South, ed., Eugene D. Genovese, p. 15; Clinton V. Black, History of Jamaica, p. 97.

worked alongside blacks in the fields, and slaves could have become craftsmen in town. A racial blurring of the labor force, however, would have made Negroes the economic competitors of whites, and a key element used to preserve the white man's identity would have been destroyed. Occupations in Jamaica and Carolina were more than mere sources of livelihood; they were symbols for identification and a means to self-respect.

The desire to segregate the labor force was manifested in the disapproval whites exhibited for its violation. In each colony skilled labor was scarce, and sizeable numbers of black tradesmen ultimately emerged to compensate for this shortage. Vital as their skills were, however, the presence of black artificers was an offense to many whites. In Charlestown the existence of black tradesmen caused "widespread and continuing resentment."¹⁷ Whites in Jamaica grew so incensed by Negro craftsmen that the island government limited trades at which blacks could be employed. Negroes skilled at trades failed to vanish from the colonies, but neither did the indignation felt by whites for their presence disappear.¹⁸ A black artisan was not only a threat to

¹⁷Brathwaite, p. 155; Jordan, p. 129.

¹⁸Memorial of Jamaica Council to Board of Trade, March 13, 1715-16, Colonial Office Papers Class 137, Vol. XI, 47, cited by Frank Wesley Pitman, The Development of the British West Indies, p. 58; Brathwaite, p. 154.

the white man's status, he was a living refutation to the concept of his supposed inferiority.

Miscegenation also exposed a sense of insecurity felt by whites and a desire to safeguard their dominant position in society. In South Carolina and Jamaica, sex between the races was a rigid relationship reserved for white men and Negro women only. The idea of sex between white women and black men was more than shocking; it was incomprehensible. Those who remarked on the parentage of colored offspring spoke only of white fathers and Negro mothers. Planters' wives were placed into a rigid double standard of sexual conduct. White men, according to Winthrop Jordan, placed their wives upon pedestals and then ran off to "gratify their passions elsewhere."¹⁹ To have removed the white woman from her pedestal and permitted sex with black men would have been equivalent in the planter's mind to a perverted defiling of the white race and its civilization.

Neither were sexual relations between races less ethnocentric in character than other associations between masters and slaves. Planters chose as paramours slaves who most resembled those from their own race. Mulattoes and other lightly-complected slaves were most in demand. Also, white masters were the ones to select Negro concubines; yet responsibility for these liaisons was placed upon the colored

¹⁹Long, II, 260; Jordan, p. 148.

mistress. The English partner was depicted as unsuspecting and naive; the colored lover was scheming and dishonest. Of the Negro mistress one Jamaican wrote: "She rarely wants cunning to dupe the fool that confides in her; for who shall teach the wily African deceit?"²⁰

Even the metaphysical world of the Hereafter was treated by planters as a special enclave for the white race. Planters in Jamaica and South Carolina consistently forbade religious instruction for their slaves, for many whites deeply resented slaves entering the religious sphere of their lives. One resolute Carolinian determined "never to come to the Holy Table" if slaves were also received.²¹ Another colonist asked, "Is it possible that any of my slaves could go to Heaven, and must I see them there?"²² Missionaries were barred from many Jamaican estates and the occasional planter who sought Christian training for his slaves often faced rebuke from his peers.²³

In defense of their behavior the planters' logic, if questionable, was seldom inexplicit. Slaves rather than

²⁰Ibid., 330-31.

²¹Francis Le Jau to the Secretary of St. James Parish, Goose Creek, South Carolina, September 18, 1711, S.P.G. MSS., A6, No. CXLII, cited by Klingberg, p. 23.

²²Ibid.

²³Instructions of the Clergy of South Carolina to George Johnson, March 4, 1712, S.P.G. MSS., A8 pp. 427-30, cited by Ibid., p. 6; Samuel Hurwitz and Edith Hurwitz, Jamaica, p. 70.

their masters were blamed for the lack of religious training. "Their barbarous stupidity, and ignorance of the English language," wrote one Jamaican, "render them incapable of understanding or reasoning upon what is said."²⁴ Others declared that slaves given religious training became less manageable. In 1737 the South Carolina Gazette contained a letter from the island of Antigua remarking on how the leaders of a recent slave revolt were Christians. Five years later the paper published a heated attack against those who:

Instead of teaching them the Principles of Christianity, [were] filling their heads with a Parcel of Cant-Phrases, Trances, Dreams, Visions, and Revelations, and something still worse, and which Prudence forbids to name.²⁵

A more tenable explanation for denying Christian instruction, however, probably rests in the realization that the acquisition of religious rights was a first step toward obtaining civil rights. The link between Christianity and universal brotherhood was entirely too strong to suit those living in an apartheid society.²⁶ The connection was so obvious to the Carolina legislature that in 1691 it proclaimed that the conversion of slaves was in no way associated with an act of manumission.²⁷ Not until the nineteenth century

²⁴Long, II, 429.

²⁵South Carolina Gazette, April 23, 1737, April 24, 1742, cited by Jordan, pp. 181, 185-86.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 180, 192.

²⁷Cooper and McCord (eds.), VII, 343, cited by Jordan, pp. 92-93.

was the evangelical spirit found on the plantations of Jamaica and South Carolina.

Of the many aspects of race relations none reflected more directly repugnance for blacks or a determination by whites to remain dominant than life on the plantations. In the midst of great gangs of Africans, slaveholders sought to establish racial, or at least cultural islands fashioned in the English mode. Slaves most like the English in color or in manner were placed near their masters' side, while blacks with whom planters had less in common were pushed to the periphery of the estates. Socially, the plantation community was centrifugally arranged with Negro members tending away from a center dominated by the planter and his family.

Worthy Park plantation in St. John's parish, Jamaica, was an example of this arrangement. Of the four housekeepers at Worthy Park, two were sambo women (the offspring of a mulatto and a black) and two were mulatto girls. Three waiting boys also worked in the plantation dwelling; one was black but the other two were mulattoes. Six of the seven slaves laboring indoors and in the most intimate contact with whites were not totally of African descent. Indeed, four of the seven were just as nearly white as black. The only other lightly-complected slaves on the estate worked as tradesmen near the "Great House" or as drivers and overseers, positions that required frequent contact with the whites in charge. Though young and healthy, these mulattoes were described as

not fit for field work. In the fields the "big gang" at Worthy Park numbering 137 were all black. So too were the second and third gangs totaling 135, all black.²⁸

The planters of each colony dressed their slaves in the same way that they arranged them for work. While field hands went about in coarse clothes or half nude, those who worked in the dwelling houses wore linen frocked coats with buttons at the neck and hands, long trousers, and checked shirts. Servant maids usually appeared in cotton or striped Holland gowns.²⁹ Housing patterns also reflected the master's racial tastes. White servants strung up hammocks in the hall or kitchen of the dwelling house. Nearby lived other white personnel: bookkeepers, overseers, and the like. Slave quarters for household domestics usually were next in proximity to the mansion. Furthest away, generally about half a mile, were the villages of the more African-like field hands. These villages on rice plantations were typically the most remote buildings on the estate. The planters in St. Thomas parish, Jamaica, so disliked the sight of their slaves that blacks were forced to live in disease-infested lowlands

²⁸Long, I, 387; Phillips, ed. Genovese, pp. 225, 229-30.

²⁹Phillips, Slavery, p. 492; Charles Leslie, History of Jamaica, (London: [n.n.], 1740), pp. 30-31, cited by Pitman, p. 24; The Universal Magazine, (London: [n.n.], April, 1773), p. 172, cited by Brathwaite, p. 232.

where their villages could not readily be seen.³⁰ On sugar estates even the provisions grown were separated and unlike. Blacks on their grounds grew plantains, okra, yams, mangoes, oranges, and other fruits and vegetables. The planters' grounds generally contained peas, beans, peppers, pumpkins, pineapples, cucumbers, and cassava.³¹ Thus, while whites vigorously sought out Negroes at the auction bloc and boasted of the number they owned, on the plantation these men isolated themselves from their slaves whenever possible.

To counteract the great slave populations elaborate and costly immigration schemes were devised to increase the number of whites in each colony. One act passed by the Jamaican assembly in 1749 sent agents to Britain to contact white families and secure their passage to the colony. Another law granted authority to Jamaican agents to search out English prisons for prospective colonists. In the eighteenth century the island's legislature passed no less than eleven acts designed to encourage white settlement on the island.³²

³⁰ Richard S. Dunn, Sugar and Slaves, p. 270; Peter Marsden, An Account of the Island of Jamaica. . . . (Newcastle: [n.n.] 1788), pp. 20, 22, cited by Brathwaite, p. 131; See "A Typical Plan of a Rice Plantation," cited in the binding of Augustine T. Smythe and others, The Carolina Low-Country; Long, II, 168-69.

³¹ Alexander Barclay, A Practical view of the present state of slavery in the West Indies (London: [n.n.], 1826), pp. 313-14, cited by Brathwaite, p. 133.

³² Long, I, 427-28; Memorial of Jamaican Council, March 13, 1715-16, Colonial Office Papers Class 137, Vol. XXVIII, 46, cited by Pitman, p. 56.

Immigration legislation, however, met with dismal failure. The act of 1749 brought less than 400 white settlers to Jamaica in five years, at the cost of more than £14,000. Prisoners brought to the island proved either poor or unwilling hands. From 1734-52 about 1,500 whites arrived in Jamaica through various immigration schemes; yet during the same period the island witnessed an influx of 35,000 African slaves. Whites never poured into Jamaica because there was no need for them. The successful production of sugar required no more whites than were already on hand. As a result, legislation to encourage immigration was ultimately repealed or simply ignored and the sugar planters remained as much in the minority as ever.³³

Energetic schemes to redress racial imbalance were also devised in South Carolina. Bounties were provided for anyone who brought white servants into the colony,³⁴ and planters were required to furnish their estates with one white for every ten slaves.³⁵ Not content with these efforts, the Carolina government also established laws to discourage the heavy importation of slaves. Importation duties were

³³Pitman, pp. 53, 56, 121-22; Gov. Nicholas Lawes to Board of Trade, September 1, 1718, Sainsbury (ed.), XXX, 443-45; Long, I, 428.

³⁴Cooper and McCord (eds.), II, 646, cited by McCrady, "Slavery," p. 637.

³⁵Cooper and McCord (eds.), III, 272, cited by Richard P. Sherman, Robert Johnson: Proprietary and Royal Governor of South Carolina (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), p. 107.

placed on blacks in an effort to stem their flow into the colony, and on occasions, Carolinians temporarily banned all slave importation.³⁶ Nothing like this occurred in Jamaica, and for a government dominated by slaveholders, such action bordered on the incredible. The rice planters were genuinely concerned with their plight as a minority race. Yet South Carolina's attempts to alter its racial composition met with no greater success than did similar efforts in Jamaica, and for essentially the same reasons. Neither bounties nor import quotas altered the fact that a plantation economy based on slave labor required a limited number of free inhabitants.

For either colony an obvious step in balancing racial numbers lay through abandoning permanently the importation of slaves. By 1770, however, Henry Laurens, his brother James, and their wealthy associate Gabriel Manigault were virtually alone among the merchant-planters of South Carolina in refraining from the slave trade. In Jamaica, the colony most threatened by the mass of Negroes, few people of prominence even questioned slave importation.³⁷ Planters were aware of the threat to their culture and their lives, but they were equally cognizant of the impact that a loss in the slave trade promised for their standard of living. The

³⁶Cooper and McCord (eds.), III, 739, cited by McCrady, "Slavery," pp. 666, 669.

³⁷Wallace, p. 219; Long, II, 471.

whites were corrupted by their own greed and for Jamaica, at least, this circumstance counted ultimately to the colony's demise as a vibrant community in the British Empire.

Relatively fruitless immigration schemes did not discourage Jamaicans from seeking other methods to assure the dominant position of whites. On an island where a premium was placed on white skin there evolved an elaborate, hierarchical system of identification based on skin tone. Though racial descriptions like mulatto and mustee (part Negro, part Indian) were not unknown on the continent, terms like sambo, terceron, quinteroon, or quadroon remained alien and were heard only in Jamaica or other islands in the British West Indies. The continental colonies also lumped together legally and socially the people of various hues as black, but such was not the case in Jamaica. Offspring removed three generations from a black parent (a quinteroon), became by law a free white, subject to all the privileges and immunities afforded any English citizen of the island. Nothing like this occurred in any other English colony, but in no other colony was there such a preponderance of African slaves, nor such a threat to the continued existence of the European colonists.³⁸

Through miscegenation the tiny white population of Jamaica was dissolving into the black race. In 1730 Jamaica

³⁸Long, II, 260-61; Jordan, pp. 168-69.

counted less than 800 people of racially mixed ancestry; by 1763 their number had reached almost 4,000.³⁹ Desperate for an answer to their dilemma, the sugar planters permitted at least part of the colored population into the white man's fold. In a colony so lacking in members of their own race, whites could ill-afford to categorize all colored as blacks.

No less disturbing than the trend in population was the increasing tendency of non-whites to gain possession of the island. In a single year (1760) mulatto children were willed from £200,000 to £300,000, including four large sugar estates, thirteen dwelling houses, and unspecified lands. To remedy this circumstance the Jamaican legislature the following year prohibited by law the further willing of property to non-whites amounting to more than two thousand pounds. Clearly the act was as desperate as the one which decreed quinterooms to be white. The negating of wills ran contrary to seven hundred years of English Common Law. The alternative, however, was to witness the ultimate transfiguration of Jamaica from a British colony to a land possessed by those of African descent, a circumstance unacceptable to the white elite. Edward Long spoke for many white Jamaicans when he anxiously asked, "Would it be more for the interest of Britain, that Jamaica should be possessed and peopled by white inhabitants or by Negroes and Mulattoes?"⁴⁰

³⁹Robert Hunter to Board of Trade, December 24, 1730, Sainsbury (ed.), XXXVII, 416; Pitman, pp. 28, 355.

⁴⁰Long, II, 323, 325-27.

So that white children might be educated in the ways of their race, it soon became the custom of planters in both South Carolina and Jamaica to send their offspring to England or to obtain European tutors from abroad. Edward Long spoke of one planter who secured tutors for his daughters and then shut them away from any association with blacks. The planter used all his vigilance to preserve his daughters' language and manners from what Long called the "infection" of blacks.⁴¹ Carolina planters commonly sent their children to Oxford, Cambridge, or most especially, the British Inns of Court.⁴²

As if to reaffirm their membership in the white race, planters adopted the manners of the English court, built homes in the latest styles, and dressed themselves in the most ostentatious European fashion. "Even the spirit of luxury and extravagance," wrote one inhabitant of the rice coast, "was beginning to creep into Carolina." Some of the principal rice planters imported horses and carriages from Britain, and they developed a taste for music, drawing, fencing, and dancing.⁴³ Whites grew obsessed with maintaining a cultural link to Europe, and the results were sometimes as ludicrous as they were dazzling. Whites in Jamaica went about in the tropical sun, "loaded, and half melting under a

⁴¹Ibid., 246, 278.

⁴²Thomas Wertenbaker, The Golden Age of Colonial Culture, p. 139.

⁴³Alexander Hewatt, An Historical Account of SOUTH CAROLINA and GEORGIA, ed. Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, Vol. II, Historical Collections of South Carolina, p. 505.

ponderous coat and waist coat, richly bedaubed with gold lace or embroidery on a hot day, scarcely able to bear them. . . ." ⁴⁴

Despite all their efforts, sugar planters at least failed to maintain the identity of their tribe. Surrounded by Negro concubines and possessed of the lawful powers to mutilate, kill, and command those around them in any way they chose, the planters came to resemble, ironically, African chieftains. The slaveholder's white woman affected the same head ties worn by the Negro women; at dances drums became accepted with the accompaniment of violins; and in time, the sugar planters even began to sound like their slaves. The Negroes' "gibberish," as one disgruntled Jamaican styled it:

infects many of the white Creoles who learn it from their nurses in infancy, and meet with much difficulty, as they advance in years, to shake it entirely off and express themselves with correctness. ⁴⁵

Edward Long spoke of the planters' white daughters, isolated on country estates with scores of blacks, as creatures to be pitied. Of them he wrote:

We may see, in some of these places, a very fine young woman aukwardly [sic] dangling her arms with the air of a Negro-servant, lolling almost the whole day upon beds or settees, her head mussed up with two or three handkerchiefs, her dress loose, and without stays. At noon, we find her employed in gobbling pepper-pot, seated on the floor, . . . Her ideas are narrowed to the ordinary subjects

⁴⁴Long, II, 520-21.

⁴⁵Ibid., 43; James Stewart, A view of the past and present state of the Island of Jamaica. . . . (Edinburgh: [n.n.], 1823), p. 207, cited by Brathwaite, p. 303.

that pass before her, the business of the plantation, the tittle-tattle of the parish; the tricks, superstitions, diversions, and profligate discourses, of black servants. . . .⁴⁶

South Carolina whites were not unaware of a similar threat to their community. In a letter to a local missionary Henry Laurens touched upon the effect slaves had on white colonists. He wrote:

I wish their [immigrant] Children may turn out a good Race but am afraid the Negroes have too much Influence upon them and I have observ'd that often where a Man has slaves his Children become lazy & indolent.⁴⁷

Yet on the rice coast racial or cultural assimilation never threatened as seriously as in Jamaica.⁴⁸ On the island visitors as well as colonists spoke frequently of the threat to whites by so many slaves. Wrote one traveller in Jamaica:

The very Propriety and Accent of the English Language were quite corrupted in this Island, by conversing so much with Mulattoes and Negros; for they were so very closely intermixed, that they suckled, eat, [sic] drank, and lay together; wherfore their Tempers and Manners may be very easily accounted for.⁴⁹

The English sugar magnates were pitted in a losing battle against West African culture and their greed for slave

⁴⁶Long, II, 279.

⁴⁷Henry Laurens to John Ettwein, March 2, 1763, Philip M. Hamer (ed.), The Papers of Henry Laurens III, 356.

⁴⁸A detailed explanation for the relative security of South Carolina's white population is provided in the following chapter.

⁴⁹Works of James Houstoun, ([n.p.]: [n.n.], [n.d.]), p. 293, cited by Jordan, pp. 176-77.

labor. And the ultimate outcome seemed as threatening to the planters' racist views as the most tumultuous slave revolt. English culture was losing its grip; speaking a sort of Anglo-African dialect, siring colored children, and dancing to the beat of the native drum, the planter-chieftain and his family were becoming African!

The ethnocentric planters from Carolina and Jamaica were repulsed by the presence of so many blacks. As a result, whites removed Negro slaves from their sight whenever possible. When blacks were called upon it was generally in a subservient role that reminded slaveholders of their dominant position and reinforced their conviction in the Negroes' inferiority. In each colony even religion was treated as an exclusive, all-white affair; the Christian doctrine was linked too nearly in the planters' minds to biracial fellowship and manumission. Uncomfortable in the company of so many blacks, the colonists attempted to withdraw into themselves and to fashion a lifestyle to remind them of their British homeland.

In Jamaica, however, the sugar planters, racial introverts though they were, could not remain untouched. The preponderance of blacks was too great. Elaborate and imaginative schemes were devised to increase the white population, but they failed miserably; when planters persisted in importing vast numbers of African slaves, they sealed the fate of their much cherished white race.

CHAPTER IV

CITIES AND ABSENTEE PLANTERS

The slaveholders of Jamaica and South Carolina were white supremacists searching for a way to secure their racial and cultural identity. Civilization, to them, seemed threatened by the perverted and corrupting influence of hordes of Africans. Indeed, in Jamaica the very survival of the white race seemed at stake. Dressing in knee pants and riding about in English carriages was obviously not enough to guarantee the perpetuation of the European way of life. To continue as a separate racial entity planters were forced to remove themselves from the influence of so many blacks. In both South Carolina and Jamaica planters became absentee proprietors; slaveholders on the rice coast moved to the relatively white confines of the city of Charlestown, and the sugar magnates of Jamaica retired to the racial security of Britain.¹ Concern over the effect of nonresident planting on what were essentially agrarian communities was superseded by the planters' urge to divest themselves of the Negro influence. Increasingly through the eighteenth century, planters fled their estates, for the fear and uncertainty

¹Winthrop Jordan, White Over Black, pp. 142, 147.

of racial violence and the abhorrence felt for blacks triumphed over all other emotions.

From the very beginning Charlestown was a fortress city offering protection from the innumerable dangers from Spain and the wilderness. Initially, the settlement was surrounded by walls. Soon, however, the community also became a racial bastion for white settlers. In a colony where the racial composition of tidewater districts resembled that of the West Indies, Charlestown by the 1700's emerged dramatically as the single region where whites gathered in numbers equal to that of blacks. In 1719 the city counted 1,400 whites and an equal number of blacks. Fifty years later the number of city dwellers had increased considerably, but the racial composition remained essentially unchanged with 5,030 whites and 5,833 Negroes.²

Charlestown was more than a mere concentration of European colonists, however. It was also an outpost of white civilization. In Carolina all roads led literally to Charlestown, and the city soon emerged as not only a political and economic center but a cultural capital as well. A public free school and numerous private academies were established as early as 1712; in 1748 the Charlestown Library Society, an organization dedicated to intellectual pursuits,

²Samuel Gaillard Stoney and Bayard Wootten, Charlestown, p. 17; James Moore, March 21, 1721, Records in the British Public Office Relating to South Carolina MS IX, 23, cited by Robert L. Meriwether, The Expansion of South Carolina, p. 4; David Duncan Wallace, South Carolina, p. 197.

was founded; and by the following decade the city was the scene of frequent plays and concerts given by talented professionals.³ So vibrant was the Charlestown community that by the mid-eighteenth century it "ranked with the first cities of British America. . . ." ⁴ Imposing brick buildings filled the city, streets were spacious, well planned, and lined with pine, cedars, and cypress. The mode of living, according to one Carolinian, was very nearly the same as in England.⁵

Into this setting flocked rice planters from the surrounding low-country. In a colony overrun with blacks, Charlestown became for slaveholders an escape into the reassuring sights and sounds of the white man's world. Leaving their plantations for months at a time, the planters moved to townhouses in Charlestown where their presence soon was overwhelming and where, according to one historian, they "were in a fashion more Charlestonian than the citizens who had passed all their lives within the sound of St. Michael's bells."⁶

The relationship between planters and city was reciprocal. Charlestown offered planters the benefits of an

³Thomas J. Wertenbaker, The Golden Age of Colonial Culture, pp. 137-38, 140, 147-48.

⁴Alexander Hewatt, An Historical Account of SOUTH CAROLINA and GEORGIA, ed. Bartholomew Rivers Carroll, Vol. II, Historical Collections of South Carolina, p. 501.

⁵Ibid., 506; Eugene M. Sirmans, Colonial South Carolina, pp. 58-59.

⁶Stoney and Wootten, p. 13.

urban environment and opportunity for contact with other members of their race, but planters in return gave the city many of its most distinguished residents. Slaveholders who poured into Charlestown from out-lying districts caused a concentration of talent and wealth that manifested itself in many of the community's cultural achievements. In short, if Charlestown flourished and served as a kind of racial gathering point for sugar planters, its stature was due largely to the planters themselves. They made sure the city was more than a jumping off place for England, or a mere collection of unsightly hovels in the Negro-infested low-country. Among other things, planters made the city South Carolina's capital for the white race.

The significance of these developments upon South Carolina history can hardly be overstated. The ascendancy of Charlestown to the status of a major colonial city assured white inhabitants of the rice coast of their survival as a race and a culture. Rice planters would not be lost in a "sea of blacks."⁷ Instead they would congregate in Charlestown and develop a community that in the estimation of one British visitor, "approached more nearly . . . the social refinement of a great European capital," than any other American city.⁸

⁷Jordan, p. 141.

⁸Augustine T. Smythe and others, The Carolina Low-Country, p. 137.

Planters who made annual summer treks to the city were hardly, as has been supposed, escaping malarial-infested rice swamps for a more healthful climate of the coast. Charlestown was never troubled with malaria but it suffered frightfully from epidemics of yellow fever. It was about an eight-to-one risk that any summer the community would have an outbreak. The relatively healthful regions of South Carolina were the up-country hills and the "high and dry" pine barrens that comprised 80 per cent of the low-country, not the fever-plagued coast around the capital. Neither did whites come to Charlestown solely for protection from Indians or European enemies. Absentee planting grew in volume through the eighteenth century as the threat from Indians declined. Also, colonists learned during Queen Ann's War, when a French invasion force sought to storm Charlestown by sea, that the safety of a coastal city was not always preferable to the dangers of the interior.⁹ Rice planters turned urbanites were in a large measure seeking protection from slave rebellions, African culture, and the overall unsettling presence of tens of thousands of blacks.

In Jamaica whites reacted to the threat from slaves in the same manner as their counterparts on the rice coast. Established a generation before Carolina, the island of Jamaica by the latter 1600's was a thriving community with

⁹Ibid., 135; Stoney and Wootten, p. 14; Anon., American Husbandry, eds. Harry J. Carmen and Rexford G. Tugwell, p. 270.

sugar estates, thousands of slaves, and, rapidly developing urban center--Port Royal. Possessed of an excellent harbor, Port Royal soon grew into an attractive, bustling center of export with all the trappings of an urban environment. As a result, planters flocked to the community and established themselves as absentee proprietors as early as the 1670's. Like Carolina planters in the following century, these absentee proprietors bought townhouses, established and patronized cultural events, and, in general, helped mold Port Royal into the foremost city of the British West Indies.¹⁰ And like eighteenth-century Charlestown, the city of Port Royal became a racial outpost for whites who gathered in appreciable numbers.

By the latter seventeenth century the future of Port Royal seemed bright indeed. In 1680 the city contained roughly one-quarter of the island's ten thousand white inhabitants, including twenty-eight of the islands' eighty-eight largest landholders. One visitor to Port Royal described its planter-residents as gentry who lived "to the Hight of Splendor, in full ease and plenty . . . sumptuously arrayed, and attended on. . . ." ¹¹

¹⁰ Richard Blome, A Description of the Island of Jamaica; with the other isles and territories in America, to which the English are Related. . . . (2nd. ed.; Louisville: Lost Cause Press, 1970), p. 141.

¹¹ John Taylor, Multum in Parvo or Parvum in Multo. Taylor's Historie of his life and Travels in AMERICA MS p. 500, cited by Richard S. Dunn, Sugar and Slaves pp. 183.

In 1692, however, both the city and its future came to an abrupt and catastrophic end. On June 7 of that year the city was destroyed beyond repair in less than three minutes by an earthquake that killed hundreds and left Port Royal submerged twenty feet beneath the Caribbean Sea. In the words of one survivor:

Port Royal, the fairest town of all the English plantations . . . exceeding in its riches, plentiful of all good things, was shaken and shattered to pieces, and sunk into, and covered for the greatest part by the sea. . . .¹²

The destruction of Port Royal was a stunning blow, and an event that ultimately proved as far reaching to the island as the introduction of sugar cane. The economic and social capital of Jamaica was gone; and equally important, so too vanished the white man's surest guarantee that European culture would retain at least a foothold. Colonists were aware of their loss and they struggled to rectify it by establishing new cities. The Jamaica legislature passed acts to encourage the building of towns along the coast, and efforts were made to make popular a watering resort in St. Thomas parish where planters in sizeable numbers might assemble. All such efforts were fruitless, however. Towns established at random throughout the island lacked an economic base and failed, therefore, to develop. In St. Thomas,

¹²Anon., "A Full Account of the late dreadful Earthquake at Port Royal. . . ." Gentleman's Magazine XX, 212-15, cited by Frank Wesley Pitman, The Development of the British West Indies, p. 19.

the threat posed by the war-like Maroons dashed hopes for a planter's resort in the interior.¹³ Years afterward, Edward Long, apparently unaware of these efforts, bemoaned the fact that "it never occurred to the legislature of the island to form a central town, well garrisoned, which would not only serve for a secure retreat in times of danger, but become the seat of retirement to the richer families. . . ."¹⁴ Though misinformed about the past, the sugar planter correctly hit upon a fundamental weakness of the island community in his own time--a weakness destined to contribute to Jamaica's ultimate demise as a colony.

After Port Royal's destruction there remained the inland capitol, Spanish Town, where apparently some absentee planters tried to relocate. Spanish Town was no Port Royal, however. It was old and poorly planned with narrow streets and buildings in a ruinous state, and as a consequence the town never attracted sizable numbers of planters. Kingston soon emerged on the coast to make good the commercial loss felt by the Port Royal catastrophe. It was only in the economic sphere however, that Kingston became comparable to the older port city. Wrote one Jamaican of the new economic center: "if any person will imagine a large town entirely

¹³Ibid., pp. 26-27, 119.

¹⁴Edward Long, The History of Jamaica I, 404.

composed of booths at a race course, and the streets merely roads . . . he will have a perfect idea of Kingston."¹⁵

The desire by the planters to remain aloof from their slaves did not, however, perish along with the city of Port Royal. With the number of blacks mounting annually, life in Jamaica began to seem increasingly unattractive for fearful, ethnocentric planters. In response to this condition sugar magnates by the opening of the eighteenth century began to retire to the near absolute racial security of England. Soon many, if not most, of the Jamaican proprietors were living in high splendor in London, Southhampton, or Bristol. So common was the practice of returning to the homeland by 1740 that one Jamaican wrote: "Whenever any person has made his fortune, he seldom fails to transport his Family and Effects to England."¹⁶ Other planters declined to bring their families to Jamaica for even a limited period. Instead they left their wives and children in England where they joined them once the sugar estate was placed on a payable basis.¹⁷

The Trans-Atlantic absentee system successfully removed planters from the threat of Negroes, of course, but

¹⁵Charles Leslie, History of Jamaica (London: [n.n.] 1740), pp. 28, 30-31, 35-39, cited by Pitman, p. 26; Mathew Lewis, Journal of a West India Proprietor ([n.p.]: [n.n.], 1834), pp. 160-61, cited by Lowell Joseph Ragatz, The Fall of the Planter Class, pp. 14-15.

¹⁶Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, American Negro Slavery, p. 51; Anon., Importance of Jamaica to Great Britain ([n.p.]: [n.n.], 1740), p. 56, cited by Pitman, p. 35.

¹⁷Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, The Slave Economy of the Old South, ed., Eugene D. Genovese, p. 84.

the effect upon Jamaica was devastating. The tiny white population of Jamaica became increasingly a transient community whose avowed aim was nothing more than accumulating money and returning to England. As a result, a sense of community or civic spirit was impossible to develop.

Jamaican planters of the eighteenth century expressed little in the way of pride for their colony, and their fundamental concern lay in remaining untouched by the unique Anglo-African culture evolving on the island. Rather than becoming a home, Jamaica with its inescapable hordes of blacks became merely a business venture and a temporary abode. As early as 1702 the English commander in the Caribbean, Admiral John Benbow, complained of this condition when he wrote:

The Government of this Island now is entirely in the hands of Planters who mind nothing but getting Estates and when so to goe off, having no regard to the King's Interest or Subjects. . . .¹⁸

A lack of community spirit caused public services and enterprises to suffer frightfully in Jamaica. Roads lay in a terrible state, and bridges were all but nonexistent; for coastal planters saw no need for communication with the few whites to the interior. Island defenses were also neglected; army garrisons became ill-equipped and often lay in a state of disrepair. In 1715 the assembly even refused to provide subsistence for soldiers stationed in Jamaica, troops whose fundamental duty it was to guard white inhabitants from

¹⁸Long, I, 6; Admiral John Benbow to Secretary of State, James Vernon, June 1, 1702, W. Noel Sainsbury (ed.), Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series XX, 368.

extinction at the hands of their slaves. Absentee planting also drained the island of its best leaders. As absenteeism mounted, the colony's ability to fill its legislature with competent men grew increasingly more difficult. By the latter eighteenth century the chamber was staffed essentially by agents or attorneys from absentee estates, men of low caliber and of little education or ability.¹⁹ The absentee system of planting that drew together the most talented minds in South Carolina served only to disperse and even destroy the leadership of Jamaica.

Under the direction of agents and attorneys, plantations were no better managed than the colony's government. Never a model of efficiency or social beneficence, sugar plantations under the guidance of these men were at their worst. Paid on a commission and possessed of no other interest than producing the largest crop possible, plantation agents worked to exhaustion land, tools, animals, and slaves. This condition led to waste, cruelty, and even slave rebellions; as long as the owner in England received a steady income, he remained content. Of this potentially dangerous practice island assemblymen anxiously noted: "In the absence of the Masters and sometimes from the Cruelty of Overseers they [the slaves] are driven to revolt thro' Despair, where

¹⁹Ragatz, pp. 44-47; Long I, 466-70; II, 210; Mr. Aylmer to Board of Trade, March 25, 1715, Great Britain Board of Trade, Journal of the Commissioners For Trade and Plantations III, p. 12; Pitman, p. 30.

they have no Master Resident to Resort to." Their concern was not unwarranted, for slave revolts were notoriously common on absentee estates.²⁰

Absentee planting in Jamaica destroyed the very fibre of society, causing cruelty, rebellions, agricultural waste, social corruption, and political ineptitude. Moreover, the system fed upon itself; as absentee planting increased, so too did the ills that beset Jamaican society. As a result, resident planters still in Jamaica found continually fewer reasons to remain. Rather than evolving into a healthy segment of the British Empire, Jamaica became a veritable "wilderness of materialism."²¹

Undoubtedly, a steady rise in raw sugar prices through the mid-1700's increased the number of those who could afford returning to England. Yet it is not unreasonable to assume that most planters who left Jamaica would have remained and fashioned a lifestyle similar to that of South Carolina had it been possible. The bulk of early inhabitants to both colonies originated from older British West India islands, and these early Jamaicans and Carolinians shared the same attitudes and aspirations for their new homes. Trans-Atlantic absentee planting evolved in Jamaica only after the

²⁰Ragatz pp. 55-56; Long, II, 406; Address of the assembly of Jamaica to His Majesty, March 19, 1749/50, Colonial Office Papers Class 137, Vol. XXV, p. 44, cited by Pitman, p. 115.

²¹Pitman, pp. 39, 41.

destruction of Port Royal, the white islanders' racial fortress.²²

With the city of Charlestown, South Carolina became everything Jamaica might have been. The rice coast was more than a profitable enterprise; it was a successful community. Planters residing in Charlestown were not as utterly removed from their estates as were Jamaican sugar planters who lived in England. In consequence, rice plantations and their slaves generally did not suffer from the neglect or abuse by ignorant overseers and attorneys that was so common in Jamaica. Rice planters lived away from their estates for only part of the year, and even while residing in Charlestown proprietors occasionally made visits to the plantation. Because of Charlestown, the colony of South Carolina in many respects came to resemble a "city-state."²³ Planters in Charlestown set the cultural standard, and the entire colony strove to maintain the pace. A sense of community pride developed and life on the rice coast became something other than exile on plantations filled with Africans.²⁴

Through the eighteenth century the security of Carolina planters was also enhanced by international events

²²Ibid., 21; Ragatz, p. 44; Dunn, pp. 112, 153.

²³Stoney and Wootten, pp. 13-14; Phillips, Slavery, p. 96.

²⁴Phillips, ed. Genovese, pp. 199-200; Ragatz, p. 22.

and continued settlement of the continent. With the founding of Georgia in 1733 Carolina ceased to be a frontier, and the ceding of the Spanish Floridas to Britain in 1763 eliminated the rice coast's greatest foreign threat. Also by mid-eighteenth century the danger from Indians was all but removed from the low-country at least, as settlers began to populate the upland. Significantly, the white inhabitants of the up-country also served as a military reserve for the coast in case of slave revolts. Rice planters had not only a city to perpetuate their culture but also a white population in the up-country to protect their lives.²⁵

Jamaica by contrast remained as isolated and vulnerable by the 1770's as ever. The threat from slave rebellions, African culture, and racial assimilation was, if anything, greater. While planters in the eighteenth century quit Jamaica for the security of the homeland, the size of sugar estates steadily increased; so much so that by the latter 1700's Jamaica plantations averaged more than 250 slaves. The tendency toward larger plantations increased profits but it enlarged the disproportion between the races and further encouraged absentee planting. By 1775 white Jamaicans comprised only 6 per cent of the island population. In some parts of Jamaica blacks outnumbered whites 29:1.²⁶

²⁵David Ramsay, History of South Carolina I, 9-11, 78; Wallace, p. 226.

²⁶Bryan Edwards, The History of the British Colonies in the West Indies II, p. 295; Clinton V. Black, History of Jamaica, p. 114; Edward Brathwaite, The Development of Creole Society In Jamaica, p. 69.

So enfeebled was the island by the eve of the American Revolution that the colony, though sympathetic, was totally incapable of lending aid to the Continentals. A proclamation by the assembly in 1765 supported the American colonies in the Stamp Act crisis, but the message also noted the colony's "weak and feeble" position "from its very small number of white inhabitants, and its peculiar situation, from the encumbrance of more than two hundred thousand slaves. . . ." ²⁷ With a population more than 90 per cent slave, Jamaica could not have withstood the trauma of a war of independence. Also by the 1770's Jamaica was experiencing trouble with an old enemy. In the mountainous interior once again the Maroons were growing restive and preparing for war. ²⁸

In both South Carolina and Jamaica the desire by whites to survive as a culture and a race culminated in absentee planting. Surrounded and outnumbered by blacks, planters left their estates for colonial cities where they lived among other whites and contributed to the cultural enrichment of their respective colonies. South Carolina benefited greatly from absentee planting. Charlestown became not only a racial bastion for Carolina planters but a cultural showcase as well. As a result, a sense of pride and a feeling of home developed for not only Charlestown

²⁷Address of the assembly of Jamaica to His Majesty, December 23, 1765, Journals of the Assembly of Jamaica, 1663-1826, VI (Jamaica: [n.n.], 1803-26), 569, cited by Brathwaite, p. 68.

²⁸Ibid., 248-49.

but the colony in general. South Carolina came to thrive socially as well as economically. In seventeenth-century Jamaica similar developments seem to have been taking place, but the destruction of Port Royal by earthquake changed things radically. With the city destroyed, planters moved to England to escape the Negro influence. This system, though satisfactory in its intent, had serious ramifications for the island colony. Thereafter Jamaica became increasingly a business venture and less a place to call home. Trans-Atlantic absentee planting drained Jamaica of its most competent leaders and reduced still further the small white population. In their place positions of importance were filled by incompetent and often cruel men. The government, the plantations and most especially the slaves suffered as a result. Thus by the 1770's Jamaica was socially a rotting hulk of a colony and English in name only.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In pre-Revolutionary South Carolina and Jamaica the history of race relations was, in certain respects, a record of conflicting interests. Planters desired slaves and the riches their labor entailed; yet at the same time they dreaded the presence of so many blacks in their communities. A Negro servant turned murderer and rebel served to warn that slavery was a two-edged sword. For individuals as ethnocentric as the English planters, blacks were also despised as aliens. This incongruous set of attitudes caused planters to accept slavery as an institution but at the same time reject its individual parts. As a result, planters in both South Carolina and Jamaica were forced to engage in a never-ending attempt to reconcile their conflicting interests.

The basis of the colonists' dilemma originated from the affluent lifestyle afforded successful planters. In each colony many slaveholders amassed great fortunes that made them some of the wealthiest men in the British Empire. This circumstance stirred the imagination. By living as a slaveholding planter one could achieve a standard of living heretofore limited to royalty. As a result, African slaves were desired like gold itself. Prices for slaves rose steadily, and the number of blacks entering Carolina and Jamaica soared. So great was the influx of blacks that by

the 1700's they comprised the great majority of inhabitants in each colony. The Negro slave became the greatest investment of the planter class. Yet slaveholders in each colony were amply rewarded, so much so that before long they were the envy of thousands.

A planter's life also offered power and prestige to its participants, for those who comprised an economic elite came to dominate socially and politically as well. Great slaveholding planters filled posts in their local governments while socially they set the pace for their communities. For those enamoured with the sense of power there was also the plantation itself. On their estates the slaveholders' authority was virtually god-like, for they commanded their slaves anyway they pleased. What became common, as a result, were slave gangs worked to a state of exhaustion or even death while in the "Big House" planters stood surrounded by Negro concubines and servants. The plantation system and the African slave combined to offer whites a chance for gratification of almost every human longing. And nowhere was the opportunity more completely exploited than in Jamaica and South Carolina.

The planters' world was not always one of opulent living and sensual delights, however. To the contrary, isolated in the New World and heavily outnumbered by their slaves, planters in the two colonies were haunted by the fear of slave revolts. Unfortunately for the planters, their anxieties were not unfounded; blacks proved more than once

that they were capable of large-scale, bloody insurrections. The island of Jamaica was rocked by more slave revolts than in any other colony in the Empire. Equally threatening to the colonies' tranquility were nearby foreign communities that lured away many slaves with a promise of freedom. In South Carolina blacks made their way to Spanish Florida while those in Jamaica fled to Cuba, Haiti, or organized communities of Negro runaways in Jamaica's interior.

These dangers played upon the planters' minds and had a fundamental influence on their behavior. Planters took on characteristics typical of a fearful and insecure people. They became men of violence who quickly struck out at any slave who deviated from prescribed behavior. Slaveholders in each colony became citizen-soldiers, ever on the watch for conspiracies or revolts. These fears sometimes caused the two colonies to resemble military districts. Laws were established that regimented the lives of blacks and denied them the most basic personal liberties. In Jamaica British troops stationed to guard against slave revolts became a common sight. South Carolina slaveholders even organized into a military police that rode about the countryside in search of runaways or "suspicious-looking" blacks.

To further reduce the chance of insurrection Negroes were kept busy at unending tasks throughout the year. Idleness, it seems, was considered a vice conducive to conspiracy. In South Carolina blacks were assigned tasks

individually and according to their physical strength, while in Jamaica slaves were worked in gangs. Planters also shunned labor-saving devices in favor of crude but time-consuming physical labor. On the rice coast of South Carolina even a major cash crop, indigo, was planted for possibly no other reason than to keep slaves occupied.

Blacks were disliked as well as feared. Both rice and sugar planters shared a profound aversion toward their slaves. Negroes were depicted by planters as more bestial than human, and totally lacking in the niceties of civilized behavior. Undoubtedly planter disdain was in part in defense of subjugation of blacks; yet whites left no doubt by the way they lived that a repugnance expressed for Negroes was genuine. Blacks were placed in subservient roles that reinforced the planters' belief in their inferiority; whenever possible, they were kept literally from their master's sight. Labor was divided along racial lines with menial tasks and jobs requiring brute strength relegated to blacks. Religious training was denied slaves, for whites were offended by the concept of multi-racial brotherhood. Also, the Christian doctrine was too nearly associated in the minds of many with manumission. Even sexual relations between races were fashioned to remind both Negro and white of their respective social roles. Miscegenation was for white men and Negro women only. The idea of white women submitting to sex with Negro men was intolerable.

The planters' racial tastes were also reflected in the way they staffed slaves on the plantations. Negroes

most like their masters in appearance or manners filled positions that required frequent contact with the proprietor. The more African-like Negroes with whom planters had less in common were placed in the fields as laborers and housed far away from the planter's dwelling. Slaveholding planters, in short, sought to establish on their estates racial or at least cultural pockets that reminded them of Britain.

The planters' efforts to remain isolated from the mass of blacks did not succeed, however. Slaves in both South Carolina and Jamaica were simply too numerous to be ignored. This condition caused great concern among whites for it posed the threat of their extinction as a race. Not only rebellion and race war but also through racial assimilation, white civilization was threatened by the Negro masses. To offset this danger colonists formulated a number of elaborate and imaginative schemes. Laws were instituted in each colony to encourage white settlement. In Jamaica a complex and hierarchical system of identification based on skin tone was developed. Colored persons removed three generations from a black ancestor were decreed by law to be white. Also on the island, inheritances passed on to colored off-spring were restricted in size to prevent the ultimate possession of Jamaica by those of African descent.

As if to reaffirm their membership in the white race, planters in both colonies dressed in the latest European fashion, built elegant Georgian homes, and, in general, took on the manners of the British court. Their children were

either sent to England for an education, or tutors were obtained from abroad. More than vanity was involved in the ostentatious lifestyle of the planters. Heavily outnumbered by African slaves, whites were fighting for their existence as a racial and cultural entity.

Such efforts were for the most part a failure, however. Plans for immigration failed to draw great numbers of whites to either colony while at the same time miscegenation, particularly in Jamaica, threatened to eliminate the white race in a few generations. Also, the trappings of European civilization displayed by planters were too superficial to be of lasting influence on the plantation. Surrounded by Negro concubines and possessed of the lawful powers to mutilate, kill, and command those around them in any way they chose, planters ironically came to resemble African chieftains more than English gentlemen. In Jamaica, African culture was also leaving its mark. Whites began to act and even speak in a manner that resembled their black servants. Planters found themselves in a struggle against West African culture and their own greed for slave labor, and on plantations where whites were so greatly outnumbered by blacks, the battle was being lost.

This condition seemed as frightening to bigoted, ethnocentric English planters as the most calamitous slave revolt. To stave off what seemed to the planters as disaster, the practice of absentee planting was begun. In a supreme effort to maintain their cultural and racial

identity, slaveholders deserted the plantations and its gangs of blacks. In South Carolina slaveholders left their estates and converged on Charlestown while in Jamaica whites assembled initially in the coastal city of Port Royal. Absentee planting in South Carolina proved most successful. In Charlestown whites not only survived as a race; they flourished. The city, already a political center, became a capital for the white race as well. Throughout the South Carolina low-country, Charlestown stood out as the only region where whites were found in as appreciable a number as blacks. And once in Charlestown, the wealthy, culturally-aspiring planters helped to establish the town as one of the foremost cities in British America. Absentee planting assured whites in South Carolina that their race would maintain a dominant position.

As early as the 1670's planters in Jamaica began to flock to their chief center of export, Port Royal. As in Charlestown in the following century, planters bought townhouses, patronized cultural events, and, in general, helped to build Port Royal into a leading colonial city. Also, Port Royal developed like Charlestown as a kind of racial fortress for whites. As a result, absentee planters, though inhabiting an island filled with blacks, had little reason to feel threatened as a race. The city of Port Royal and the fate of Jamaica as an English colony took an abrupt turn for the worse, however, when in 1692 the town was completely destroyed by earthquake. The event was a devastating blow from which the colony never recovered. As

the number of slaves continued to rise, planters, without their racial bastion Port Royal, began to retire to the security of Britain. Absentee planting in Jamaica became a Trans-Atlantic system, and with its inception the decline of Jamaica began.

The effects of this kind of absentee planting upon Jamaica were catastrophic. It was impossible for proprietors stationed in England to supervise their estates; in their place were hired plantation agents. These agents had no other concern than extracting maximum profits from the estates; as a result, plantation equipment, lands, and slaves suffered frightfully. Slave revolts, in turn, became most common on absentee estates. The colony as a whole lost its sense of community or civic spirit; an island that had been home for many became merely a place to do business. Defenses were neglected, and political posts came to be filled with incompetents. The most talented and capable personnel returned to England when they made their fortunes. In short, absentee planting in Jamaica ultimately destroyed the very fibre of the society.

In the end, the urge for racial self-preservation affected each colony in a fundamental way. For South Carolina this circumstance worked to the colony's advantage. In Jamaica, on the other hand, it helped destroy a once vibrant English colony.

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