

our cultural history. New Harmony, for instance, was not successful as a utopian community, but its failure should not preclude an evaluation of the cultural contributions it engendered: the first kindergarten, the first nursery school, the institution of free libraries, the inspiration of a free school system in Indiana and hence throughout the Middle West, and the first school system offering equal advantages to both sexes. Of these significant consequences of utopian experiment, Holloway is properly, but almost uniquely, observant.

In any such brief work one would expect to encounter occasionally somewhat sweeping generalizations and opinions; while Holloway does not document his every assertion with a footnote, his descriptions and judgments seem, on the whole, authoritative and sound.

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*The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations.* By William Dosite Postell. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Studies, Social Science Series Number One, 1951, pp. xiii, 231. Introduction, illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$3.00).

There have been a number of articles and chapters of books, as well as published portions of diaries and plantation accounts, that have dealt with the care and health of slaves, but this is the first monograph that treats the subject in its entirety and in relation to the medical problems facing the country as a whole.

The study is set in its proper perspective by a summary of the medical conditions in the United States in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. This resume reveals the low state of public health and the apathy toward health reforms, and it shows that problems in the South differed from those in other rural areas only because of climatic conditions and the large Negro population.

Cholera and yellow fever epidemics attracted more attention than the other diseases, but Postell maintains that the domestic diseases constituted the greater hazard to the slave and the owner. Of these, pneumonia was probably the most fatal; but tetanus, dysentery, and dietary disturbances also took a rather large toll. Negroes were the greatest sufferers from cholera, but malaria troubled them little. Similarly,

there is little mention of venereal infection, and tuberculosis was much less common before emancipation than after.

To cure the ills of the slaves there were several types of "doctors": botanic, regular, homeopaths, hydropathists, eclectics, and "medicine men." But domestic cures—based on tradition, the "doctor book," popular magazines, and agricultural journals—underlay the medical practice in the South. The prescription of the "doctor" or the self-appointed practitioner might be good, bad, or indifferent and the rating frequently varied from one disease to another. In comparing treatments for flux, pleurisy, and worms, the author concludes that the domestic remedy was best in two cases and that the botanic remedy did the "least amount" of harm in the third case. The regular medical treatment did not "score." The reader, of course, is not to conclude that this was true for all diseases. While quakery, superstition, magic, and sheer humbug constituted far-too-important elements of the practice of the period, and while the treatments can best be described as crude and heroic, there were giants among the medical men of that era and encouraging progress was being made by 1860.

The planter was ever-mindful of the well-being of his slaves, and the conclusion is reached that the "over-all picture of slave health is simply a picture of health conditions in the United States, and their health status was no better and no worse than that of the populace as a whole for that period" (p. 164).

The cataloging of ills and remedies does not lend itself to a smooth-flowing narrative style, but the problems presented by such a study do not excuse such loose writing as the following: "Dr. Philips of Mississippi stated that on his plantation they churned every day, the Negroes, with the exception of the children, getting all the sour milk" (p. 35); and "Unfortunately, Negro women were not all the traditional born cooks depicted in literature" (p. 37). There are some other slips in writing and in calculations, but they do not detract seriously from the value of this volume to the student of slavery and the antebellum South.

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*A Home in the Woods: Oliver Johnson's Reminiscences of Early Marion County.* As related by Howard Johnson. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1951, pp. 92.