

With all the drawbacks of slavery, it should be noted that slavery was the earliest form of social security in the United States. It was the legal responsibility of the master to take care of aged workers. It was against the law to emancipate a slave after he was too old to work. The master was responsible for looking after his over-aged slaves. It is true that the average ages to which slaves lived were less than those of the whites. But this difference was not great, and a similar difference exists between the races today.

#### EDUCATION OF THE SLAVES

One of the least favorable sides of slavery is seen when we study the formal education of the Negro. It was against the law in slavery time to teach slaves to read and write. However, there were a number of Negroes in antebellum Alabama who learned to read and write, and some who acquired considerable education. Like many other laws, this one was not always enforced. Young Negro slaves were frequently taught to read and write by their white playmates.

Religious training was encouraged and through this many slaves learned to read. Slaves usually joined the churches of their masters. The most numerous denominations of slaves were Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians—just as these denominations were most numerous among white people in Alabama.

Some slaves learned to read and write in order to attend to their master's business. Certain masters helped their slaves in other ways to receive schooling. Samuel Townsend of Huntsville emancipated a number of Negro slave children in his will and left an estate to provide for their education. Townsend knew that they could not enter any schools in Alabama, so he provided that they be sent to school in the North. Pattie Malone was a slave girl who lived at the Cedars plantation in the Tennessee Valley. When her master, Colonel James Malone, realized that Pattie's contralto voice was a remarkable gift, he sent her to school. Eventually Pattie Malone won international fame as a singer.

In spite of all exceptions, most of the Negro slaves could not read and write. However, vocational education was never banned. The more skill a slave had in some trade, the more valuable he was. The great Alabama Negro, Booker T. Washington, who was himself born a slave in Virginia but rose to become one of the nation's leading educators, said, "In a certain way, every slave plantation in the South was an industrial school."

#### LAWS ON SLAVERY

The most favorable view of slavery appears in the plantation records which show the everyday life and labor of the slave, while the most