

The Courier
July 19, 1844.

Jehossee Island.

The Country Seat of Honorable William Aiken.

A visit to this place - its situation and improvements - Causeway connecting it with Edisto Island - Extensive rice lands - canals, locks, etc. - Summer residence of overseer - Agricultural experiments - Threshing pounding other mills - large number of slaves - Their system of management - Their houses, hospitals, nurseries, etc. - Their religious instruction - Successful efforts in this respect - Mansion and other buildings - kind attention of overseer.

Edingsville, July, 1844.

Messrs. Editors -

I have been spending a few weeks at this delightful summer retreat, enjoying the fresh and salubrious breeze of the ocean, and partaking of the generous and kind hospitality of the inhabitants. A few days since through the politeness of a friend, I was enabled to visit Jehossee Island, the plantation and country seat of the Hon. William Aiken, of your City. It is situated at the Southern part of Edisto Island, with which it is connected by a causeway, which Mr. Aiken, some years since, erected as a convenience to himself and neighbors. This causeway was the work of no little labor, and few macadamized streets of your city surpass it, in neatness or durability of construction.

I had heard much of the extensive improvements Mr. Aiken had made at Jehossee since his purchase of it - of his having reclaimed its lands from an almost valueless Savannah. I had heard still more of the very efficient police he had established in the management of upwards of seven hundred slaves, at this plantation, of the moral, religious, and physical well-being he had been the instrument of securing to them, and leaving you all these, you may readily suppose one, curious like myself in such matters, felt no little desire to see

these things with his own eyes.

That privilege I have enjoyed. The report I have to make, may be of interest to some of your readers; I am certain, it will prove so to many of my northern friends, who have been taught to believe the existence of such things, anywhere at the south, entirely utopian.

Just at the head of the causeway which connects Jehossee with Edisto Island a view of the rice land appears. The eye here glances over some twelve hundred acres, in one field, in state of highest cultivation. To those fond of low land scenery, the picture is one of unsurpassed beauty. Through the Island passing over a course of upwards of four miles, the main canal is to be seen, connecting the waters of the Pon Pon river, which flows around three sides of Jehossee, and with Watts cut which separates it from Edisto Island, gives it an insular character. The canal which is upwards of 4 miles in extent, 22 ft. broad and 6 ft. deep, was cut by Mr. Aiken at a very large expense, for the purpose of supplying his fields at all times with plentiful irrigation. This was rendered necessary, from the fact, that the river on one side of the island, is at times salt, while it is never found so on the other. Intersecting the canal at right angles are other canals by which the fields are irrigated. The locks which preclude (or let in the waters of the river) of which they are seventeen are of the most approved construction the masonry indicating a simplicity and durability which would please the eye of the most fastidious architect.

On the south side of Jehossee is the overseer's summer residence, situated on a high bluff of the river, and commanding a distant view of the ocean. The spot is considered quite healthful

as any one might believe, from the healthful appearance of Mr. the overseer. This gentleman is employed by Mr. Aiken, at a liberal salary, to superintend his planting interests. After a very kind reception by him at his summer retreat, which, by the bye, is a perfect little bower, we were politely invited to ride with him over the plantation.

It is unnecessary to say more of the rice lands than that they are among the best cultivated in South Carolina. With the exception of a few acres they have all been reclaimed thru Mr. Aiken's industry and enterprise. Before his purchase of the Island, the lands were considered in a great degree an irreclaimable Savannah. Perhaps in no portion of the southern country can a larger body of rice land be seen in one field. Some idea of the extent may be formed, when I tell you its area would cover all the space upon which Charleston is built. I would here attempt a description of a scene whose novel beauty so much pleased me at the time, but as most of your readers are familiar with such sights I shall not indulge the temptation. While passing over the fields we were pointed to several spots in them, upon which Mr. Aiken had experimented with various manures, on some of these we could not help but remark the wonderful improvement the application of calcarious manures had produced. From acidity some of these spots had been rendered entirely unproductive - They were now yielding abundantly. In the corn field, three hundred acres of which are under culture, we were pointed to land, which, a few years since, could scarcely produce seed, now yielding 30 or 40 bushels to the acre, which is an enormous yield for this part of the state. Did space permit, I am sure it would be gratifying to the planter, to be informed of the many agricultural experiments Mr. Aiken had successfully tested on this plantation; but I must pass to objects of more

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interest - at least to those who, like myself, are anxious to look into the management and condition of the operatives or slaves upon a rice plantation.

The entire crop of this plantation is prepared for market on the spot. To facilitate the preparation, Mr. Aiken has erected threshing, pounding and other mills, all worked by steam power, and said to be among the best planned of any in the south. When prepared for market, the crop is sent there in his own vessels - thus uniting a system of production, of manufacture and transportation all under one head. Upon Jehossee there are between seven and eight hundred slaves. In the management of these Mr. Aiken merits the commendation of every lover of humanity. A lesson from his book would go far to dissipate the idle notion which abolitionists entertain of the working of the slave system, and would prove highly profitable to many of our own planters. I know what I write will be considered a picture too highly colored; but I feel confidence in thinking any one who will visit Jehossee will find my shades too dull.

The habitations of this plantation present the appearance of a neat little village. The Houses are of uniform size and contain four apartments each; with double fireplaces of brick. Attached to every house is a small garden and yard in front. The slaves are required to cultivate their gardens - and in every yard is a poultry house, and other buildings. All the houses are kept neatly white-washed inside and out, and the strictest and most constant cleanliness is required on the part of the occupants.

On the plantation is a commodious and well arranged hospital, to which every sick negro is carried, and attended to during his sickness. The building is supplied with numerous rooms, each

comfortably furnished with clean bedding, etc; for the different patients. Nurses are always in attendance and a skillful physician is yearly employed, to minister in all cases requiring medical attention. In the same building is a large hall for invalids, and the whole arrangement of the place is after the best hospital in the country. Care is taken that no negro is permitted to "play sick", while equal care is taken that every real ailment is promptly and kindly attended to. The effect of this admirable plan is not only grateful to Mr. Aiken's feelings of humanity, but also repays him by a profitable return of a larger increase in the augmented population of his negroes, and in their increased health, and ability to discharge their labor.

The best kind of food and clothing is given negroes, nor are they left, as on most plantations to grind their own corn, after a hard day's work in the field. This labor is done for them by a steam mill, erected for the purpose on the place; and their weekly allowance is measured out to them, in the best, and most wholesome grist. This with other articles of food, such as meat, potatoes, etc. they cook for themselves, it having been found that the slaves infinitely prefer their mode of cookery. The food of the children, however, is cooked for them by nurses, who attend them during the absence of the parents, at a building called the nursery. I never saw a finer set of looking negroes anywhere.

The great question "whether our slaves can be religiously instructed with benefit to themselves, and advantage to their owners?" Mr. Aiken has most successfully solved. On his plantation he has a neat chapel at which religious services are performed semi-monthly by a minister employed for the purpose. Every slave is compelled to attend and each is orally instructed and catechized

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by the minister. Marriages are performed according to religious rites, and a christian code of morals is strictly enjoined upon the slaves in their intercourse with each other. More than one half of the negroes on the place are communicants of the church; and as few cases of backsliding are said to take place as in any religious community of equal number. Felonies are almost unknown among them, and those petty crimes, which, on other plantations, are considered unavoidable, with these negroes are of rare occurrence.

When Mr. Aiken first proposed to introduce religious instruction among his negroes, many of his friends predicted his hopes would never be realized. They said his plan would only render the slaves greater rogues, by giving them religion as a cloak to hide their villanies. Time has proved the fallacy of these predictions. I know not whether this peculiar feature of Mr. Aiken's encouragement has produced the result, but certainly it is, there is not to be found, in all the country around, any body of negroes more orderly, well behaved, or contented. They look well, work well, and more than all work with a cheerfulness which no one can fail to observe who visits the place.

Upon our visit to Jehossee, Mr. Aiken was absent at his summer residence in Charleston. This, however, did not preclude us, his overseer inviting us to visit the mansion or homestead. This we found a neat and very comfortable building, without any pretension of show. Comfort and utility seemed chiefly consulted in the arrangement of every thing around; and the visitor in glancing around, at once realized he is at the residence of one who has made republican simplicity the habit of his life.

You may readily suppose the visit I have attempted to describe advanced us pretty much on to the afternoon, and as we desired to return to Edingsville before nightfall we were constrained to take leave of our polite conductor - Not, however, before receiving from him a most pressing invitation to sit down with him to "Pot luck", a luck, I am sure we would have found of no mean character, judging from the savory, culinary odors which came from the kitchen to regulate our olfactory nerves and tempt our eager appetites, but, time and tide wait for no man, and we were on our way to Edingsville.

I am conscious Messrs. Editors, the sketch I have attempted has been very imperfectly performed. To have noticed with accuracy, every thing at this well settled and conducted rice plantation would require a year's residence at it, and an entire volume of description. What I have attempted, however, may intimate to the planter how much he may profitably and interestingly meet with by a visit to Jehossee. After passing through some of the best cultivated cotton lands anywhere, to be met with in the world, he will be able to see as a contrast a rice plantation, which, for extent, excellent management, and productiveness, is not surpassed by any other within the state. Let him who is anxious to enjoy such a privilege feel no fear of becoming obtrusive. Mr. , the overseer, begs us to say he will always take pleasure in presenting to every gentleman who visits Jehossee, the improvements Mr. Aiken's industry and enterprise have accomplished.

In leaving Jehossee we could not but be struck with the important lesson of political economy, Mr. Aiken's example has taught us. His has been the right sort of patriotism. He has not talked of what he could do for Carolina but has done it. He has not as too many have done, boasted of his heart being in the state,

while all the time his treasure went out of it, but has as in the instance before us, expended hundreds of thousands to render what was before valueless a source of wealth to himself, and a consequent augmentation of political power to his native state. Such sort of love for one's country needs not pen to emblazon it. It stands as a monument for itself, and its memorial is read in its living benefits.

Viator