

# The Upper Old South

## *An Editorial*

IN the program of regional portraiture which *The Saturday Review of Literature* has projected, special issues of the magazine have been devoted to three Southern regions of the United States. The first two of these issues, concerned with the Southwest and the Deep South, respectively, have appeared. The third, which is before you, has been designated by the *SRL* the Upper or Old South Issue.

With allowances for the slight degree of overlapping which is inevitable in any effort to divide the South and the Southwest into three regions, for the purpose of presenting a cultural inventory of each, this three-way approach has certain manifest advantages. It permits a greater concentration upon the divergent cultural characteristics of the various areas examined, and a more intensive sampling. At the same time, it provides an excellent framework for the better understanding of the most documented and described of all the American regions.

Since the Deep South Issue took as its province the Gulf States and Georgia, plus the parts of Tennessee and Arkansas which touch the Mississippi River, the present number of the *SRL* is concerned primarily with Virginia, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Maryland, and Central and Eastern Tennessee. Its contents have been planned with a view to providing a sympathetic understanding and a vivid interpretation of a major epic in the building of America's cultural heritage.

We have here a part of America which has made a distinctive and far-reaching contribution to the political and intellectual development of the United States. The trail which leads from the mountaintop on which Thomas Jefferson dreamed his dreams of liberty and egalitarianism, to the columned portico of Old Hickory's "Hermitage," and thence to the Presbyterian manse in Staunton, where Woodrow Wilson was born, is a chain binding together mileposts on the highway not only to American, but to world democracy. It may be said, then, that the Upper Old South provides us with a blueprint, in microcosm, of the American tradition, from early colonial days to the present, embracing the planter aristocracy, the democratic climate of the frontier, the antebellum years, with their contrasts and contradictions, and the febrile twentieth century, with its speed, pace, clangor, and conflict.

The Upper Old South is primarily the tobacco South, just as the lower tier of states is, to an even greater degree, the cotton South. Tobacco growing was the base of the earlier Upper Old South and with manufacture forms the most important single unit in the economy of the present Upper South. There is also the great textile industry, far larger than New England's; there are vast shipyards and aircraft plants, hugely expanded for war purposes, whose

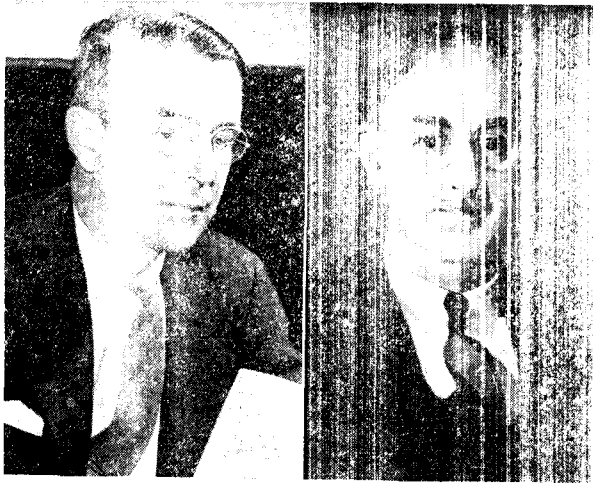
dynamamos are kept turning with surging TVA power; and there are rich farming areas, devoted to cattle and poultry raising, dairying, apples, cotton, wheat, corn, and peanuts. There is the trend toward a balanced economy that might set the enduring standard for the nation.

On the whole, the Upper South exhibits less glaring contrasts of wealth and poverty than the Lower South. The percentage of farms operated by tenants is considerably lower than for the states which touch the Gulf. The "Tobacco Road" type of sharecropper, nowhere numerous, is harder to find in the tobacco than in the cotton country. Inter-racial violence also is much less prevalent in the upper tier of states, partly, no doubt, because the proportion of Negroes in the population is lower.

Observers in the Deep South sometimes point out that on the Eastern Seaboard of the Upper South there are many trends which indicate a culture tending more toward the Eastern than the Southern. There is a large interchange of students in the universities and colleges, and the three Southern members of the Association of American Universities are in this area. The Piedmont Industrial South has violated many of the tenets of the Agrarians. Both the Upper and the Lower South have provided many distinguished literary figures in the past two decades, and each region probably has had more Pulitzer Prize winners than any other comparable area of the United States. Both combine to constitute, with part of the Southwest, what has been aptly termed Economic Problem No. 1, but both should be able to look forward to a future more satisfying than any they have ever known, when peace at last returns.

It will be particularly important in the postwar era for Americans of every region to understand the implications of an Allied victory, not only for themselves but for all other citizens of this land. This will be of special importance to the southern regions in their effort to achieve a greater degree of opportunity for all of their folk of both races; of special significance to the other regions that they may understand difficulties that abound; of greatest importance to the nation that there may be unity in diversity. The more completely each region familiarizes itself with the achievements and opportunities of the others, the greater will be the whole nation's realization of its vast potentialities, and the more certain will be the ushering in of an era of unprecedented obligation and opportunity for the South, for all regions, and for America in relation to the other regions of the new world society.

VIRGINIUS DABNEY  
HOWARD ODUM  
*Guest Editors*



Guest Editors: Virginius Dabney (left) and Howard Odum.

Virginius Dabney is editor of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, author of many articles, and of two regional volumes, "Liberalism in the South" and the recent "Below the Potomac."

Howard W. Odum is director of the Institute for Research in Social Science; editor of *Social Forces*; and author of a number of books dealing with regional factors, notably "Southern Regions of the United States," and "American Regionalism."

Gerald W. Johnson is on the editorial staff of the *Baltimore Evening Sun*, and author of many distinguished books, his latest one being "Roosevelt: Dictator or Democrat."

Donald Davidson was one of the charter members of the earlier southern Agrarians, a contributor to "I'll Take My Stand," and author of "The Attack on Leviathan."

Struthers Burt, native of Baltimore and newly adapted Southerner. Author of a baker's dozen of notable books, including "Escape from America," (1936), "Powder River," (1938), and "Along These Streets," (1941).

James Southall Wilson was former editor of the *Virginia Quarterly*, and is author of many articles.

Mildred Mell is head of the Department of Economics and Sociology at Agnes Scott College.

Melville Corbett Ivey is one of the youngest of the Chapel Hill group and is teaching sociology at Meredith College.

Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, a native of Virginia, was formerly editor of the *Baltimore News*. He is also author of "Patrician and Plebian in Virginia" and "The Old South" (reviewed in this issue).

Edith Stern, who lives in Washington, is a widely published magazine writer. Her new book, "Mental Illness: A Guide for the Family," has just been published by The Commonwealth Fund.

John Temple Graves is on the staff of the *Birmingham Age-Herald*. His books include "Tonight in the South" and "Shaft in the Sky."

## THIS WEEK: JANUARY 23, 1943

Cover from "Restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia": Palace Green as seen from the palace.

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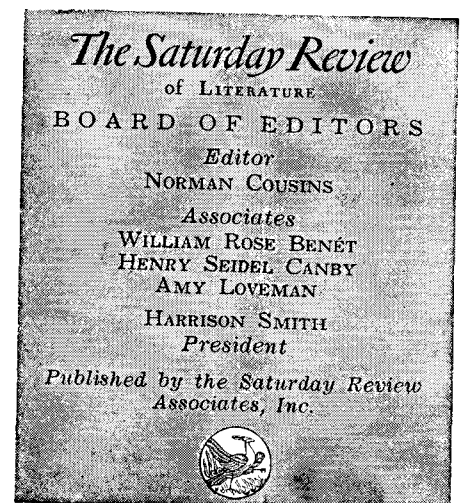
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# Symbols of the South

## *The Contrast Between Brilliance and Solidity*

GERALD W. JOHNSON

IT was in New Orleans that I received one of the great shocks of my life, administered by a vivacious lady from Texas. The conversation had seemed to me perfectly reasonable up to the point at which mention was made of my native State.

"What, you are a North Carolinian?" she exclaimed, wide-eyed. "Why, I thought you were a Southerner!"

That was years ago, but I never have recovered entirely. It taught me one of the Facts of Life, namely, that the Confederacy is no more; for if the State that supplied one-fifth of the soldiers and suffered one-third of the casualties of the Lost Cause is out, who is in? Up to that disillusioning moment I had blandly assumed that a Tarheel is not merely a Southerner, but The Southerner; so I went away chastened and subdued.

Since then, of course, Dr. Howard W. Odum has come along with his seven hundred criteria and demonstrated scientifically that there are at least two Souths and probably half a dozen; but, thanks to the lady from Texas, it did not take the careful reasoning in "Southern Regions" to convince me that there is a line of demarcation somewhere below the thirty-fifth parallel separating two regions that are a great deal more than merely geographical expressions.

It is my impression that Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer first gave to the tier of States along the Gulf Coast the designation of the Deep South, which apparently has been accepted with enthusiasm by that region. Although it gave the supercilious in the more northerly States the opportunity to observe that Deep is correct, if understood as meaning Low-Down, still the designation has merit. It is euphonious, but it is more; it offers a suggestion of the ultimate, the extreme, the outside limit; and that suggestion is the better part of its descriptive quality.

For there is no manner of doubt that it is the fixed conviction of the Deep South that the rest of the region is the Shallow South: and a plausible argument may be advanced in support of that view. I am ready to believe that the passions of a Virginian or a North Carolinian, or a Kentuckian are less likely, as a rule, to drive him to instant, forthright, and even headlong action than are those of a native of the Gulf Coast States; and if effective

motivation is a true measure of depth, the case would seem to be proved.

Indeed, I am convinced that the essential difference between the upper South and the Deep South is, in the main, a difference of degree. As measured by most standards, the Deep South exceeds the upper South. Needless to say, this does not necessarily concede its superiority; in some ways, I think it is better, but in others it is indubitably worse, for one may exceed by running into excess.

The difference between the two regions may be vividly illustrated, I think, by considering the difference between two striking personalities that have represented them in recent years. These are Cordell Hull, of Tennessee, and Huey Long, of Louisiana.

Every Deep Southerner will resent that, of course, as typical of Shallow Southern prejudice, so I add hastily that in my opinion the Kingfish had many of the elements of a great man. I believe that Mr. Hull has been of much more value to the country; and I do not believe that Long represented fairly the best that is in the Deep South. But he did represent some of its best qualities as well as all of its worst; and Long at his best was superior to Hull.

For example, the equable and easy-going Secretary of State has never approached the colossal driving power that was in Huey Long. Mr. Hull can drive, and drive hard; but I do not believe any other man of our generation was such a human dynamo as the Louisianan. He was, in fact, a complete refutation of the delusion that languor and laziness prevail under the magnolias.

Huey Long was never able to interpret what he saw in coherent and sen-

sible fashion, but he saw more than nine-tenths of the men in public life. His Share-the-Wealth program was nonsensical as an answer to the economic problem that confronted us during his days in the Senate and that still confronts us; but, although he couldn't frame the answer, I am inclined to believe that Huey Long saw the problem more clearly than the Secretary of State ever has. In vision as in energy the man from the Deep South was the stronger of the two.

AM I wrong in thinking that in this he was fairly representative of his region? The word, please note, is *representative*, not *typical*. The Deep South is full of unobtrusive, well-mannered, amiable people; but one rarely hears of them. Those of its people who have made the deepest impression upon the country are not of that type; they belong, rather, to the genus that in the region itself is described as the hell-roarer.

This is true of the Deep South in almost all of its phases. In politics it produces an occasional Oscar Underwood, or John Sharp Williams, to be sure, but it is the Longs, the Heflins, the Vardamans that startle and impress the country. In literature it can present a Stark Young, but it is the Faulkners and the Caldwelles that carry the banner of the region. Even in holy orders it is probable that Texas's Rev. George W. Truett is less frequently regarded as representative of that State than the Rev. Frank (Two-Gun) Norris.

One may retort, of course, that neither North Carolina's Senator Robert R. Reynolds, nor its novelist Thomas Wolfe is exactly pallid and noiseless. Nevertheless, the rule holds, in spite of exceptions. The representative politicians of the upper South are such men as Hull, Byrd, Glass, able, indeed, and forceful but, generally speaking, as conservative in manner and expression as in opinion. Paul Green, the Agrarian group, Elizabeth Madox Roberts—such people are its representative writers in the creative field.

John A. Rice recently declared that the North Carolinian is the most thoughtful man in the South. His judgment, without doubt, was based largely on the scholarly books that have been streaming from the University of North Carolina Press and, more recently, from Duke University. Such institutions are, of course, an important influence in the life of the region, but they modify that life, rather than create it. The academic world is a realm of its own, pretty much the same in North Carolina as in Oxford.

It is mere speculation, of course, not susceptible of statistical proof, but I think the differences that mark their

