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“THE FLORIDA PLAN”
AN ANTE-BELLUM EFFORT TO
CONTROL COTTON SALES

by WEYMOUTH T. JORDAN

FOR A NUMBER of years historians have been familiar with the work of the so-called commercial conventions which were held in the South during the pre-Civil War period.¹ Three professional studies have been written on the subject of these conventions.² These conventions had their beginnings during the troubled times of the panic of 1837; the first one met in 1839; most of them convened during the 1850's. They were held in the leading cities of the Old South; they were attended by hundreds of men seeking to promote what has come to be known as “southern nationalism;” they did a great deal more than pass resolutions, go home, and prepare for the next convention. Indeed, they were among the outstanding agencies shaping southern political and economic thought of their day. The subjects that they discussed, railroads, manufacturing, direct trade with Europe, education, expansion toward Latin America, sectionalism, slavery, and so on, were definitely among the chief issues that caused the North and South to drift apart and to fight the Civil War. What the commercial conventions had to say and what influences they and their attendants had on what the South did about all these issues have never been fully treated in any historical study. All this, and more, can be said about southern planters' conventions, for they, the planters' conventions, have received scarcely any attention from historians and other writers. Until a paper on the subject was read at a meeting of the Southern Historical Association in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1950,³ the planters' convention had largely escaped the attention of Ameri-

1. Research for this study was sponsored by a grant-in-aid from the Social Science Research Council.
2. William Watson Davis, “Ante-Bellum Southern Conventions,” *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, V (1904), 153-202; John G. Van Deusen, *The Ante-Bellum Southern Commercial Conventions* (Durham, 1926); Herbert Wender, *Southern Commercial Conventions* (Baltimore, 1930).
3. Weymouth T. Jordan, “Cotton Planters' Conventions in the Old South,” *Journal of Southern History*, XIX (1953), 321-345.

can historians.⁴ This means that practically nothing has been written about Florida's connection with the planters' conventions.

The fact is that the southern planters' conventions are of special significance, just as are the commercial conventions, and perhaps even more so, in understanding southern opinion and contemplated southern economic actions during the 1850's. So far it has been determined that twenty-four planters' conventions met in the Old South, the first in Macon, Georgia, in 1839, two in Alabama in 1845, the fourth one in Tallahassee in 1851, and the others scattered about the southern states.⁵ Florida is very important in this whole subject because it was John G. Gamble of Tallahassee, along with James Hamilton, Jr., of South Carolina, who instigated the first convention in Macon.⁶ Other Floridians, notably James E. Broome, who was then probate judge in Leon County, brought about the first of a series of at least twenty-one planters' conventions in the period of 1851 to 1861.⁷ John Gamble had the distinction of being present at the 1839 and 1851 conventions and of promoting the idea behind them until his death in late 1852.

Perhaps the following quotation from an early Liverpool newspaper will point up one of the reasons some Southerners wished to do something about controlling cotton prices. The newspaper was trying to describe the feelings of men who annually sweated out the ups and downs of the cotton market. These feelings, it was said, were "Hesitation, trepidation, consternation, prostration, resuscitation, tribulation, vacillation, desolation, desperation, ruination, damnation."⁸ In more simple words, many Southerners believed that there ought to have been some means of increasing the profits they were receiving from their production and sale of cotton.

There was also the desire to make the South self-sufficient.

4. See, for example, Lewis C. Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Washington, 1933), II, 1027.
5. Jordan, "Cotton Planters' Conventions in the Old South," *loc. cit.*, 321-345.
6. *Ibid.*; Thomas P. Govan, "An Ante-Bellum Attempt to Regulate the Price and Supply of Cotton," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XVII (1940), 302-312. A brief obituary of John G. Gamble appears in the Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, November 6, 1852.
7. *Ibid.*, July 12, August 2, 5, 9, September 20, 1851; *Alabama Planter*, V. (1851), 302; *Soil of the South*, I (1851), 118; *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 122.
8. Montgomery *Alabama Journal*, May 12, 1826, quoting a "Liverpool newspaper."

And in this regard, a Wetumpka, Alabama, editor caustically expressed a widely accepted resentment at southern dependence upon the North. He pre-empted Henry Grady by about fifty years in the latter's frequently quoted remarks along the same line. He said:

At present, the North fattens and grows rich upon the South. We depend upon it for our entire supplies. We purchase all our luxuries and necessaries from the North. We do not depend upon ourselves. We do not encourage enterprise, skill and industry at home; but give the preference to that of the North. With us, every branch and pursuit in life, every trade, profession and occupation is dependent upon the North. Our slaves are clothed with northern manufactured goods, have northern hats and shoes, work with northern hoes and implements, and are working for northern more than southern profits. The slaveholder dresses in northern goods, rides a northern saddle, sports his northern carriage, patronizes northern newspapers, drinks northern liquors, reads northern books, spends his money at northern watering places, crowds northern fashionable resorts, - in short, his person, his slaves, his farm, his necessaries, his luxuries - as he walks, rides, sleeps, loafs, lounges, or works, he is surrounded with articles of northern origin. . . . In northern vessels his products are carried to market - his cotton is ginned with northern gins - his sugar is crushed and preserved by northern machinery - his rivers are navigated by northern steamboats; his mails are carried in northern stages; his negroes are fed with northern bacon, beef, flour, and corn; his brandy toddy is cooled with northern ice; his land is cleared with a northern axe, and a northern clock sits upon his mantle piece; his floor is swept with a northern broom, is covered with northern carpet, and his wife dresses herself in a northern looking glass; his child cries for a northern toy, crows over a northern shoe, and is perfectly happy in having a northern knife; his son is educated at a northern college, his daughter receives the finishing polish at a northern seminary, his doctor graduates in a northern medical college; his schools are supplied with northern teachers, and he is furnished with northern inventions and notions. We too, say the South has her remedy, if her people will only set about to accomplish it. Let the people of the South with one voice declare today, that they will produce all articles of their consumption.

9. Wetumpka *Daily State Guard*, April 6, 1849.

This was a typical thought of the lower South of the late ante-bellum period. The Columbus, Georgia, *Sentinel*, in November, 1850, also published a widely quoted diatribe: "We frankly tell you that, so far as we are concerned, we *despise the Union, and hate the North as we do hell itself.*"¹⁰

In the months before Judge Broome and his Tallahassee associates announced their plan of controlling cotton prices, there was much talk in and around Tallahassee of ways by which the South might improve its economy. A local editor wrote, "Our good people love money most dearly. Cotton growing, they tell us, has of late, paid most penurously."¹¹ He and others preached the gospel of crop diversification, agricultural fairs and societies in order to promote scientific farming, geological surveys, encouragement of manufacturing, and direct trade between the South and Europe in order to eliminate northern commissions on the production, shipment and sale of southern goods.¹² A correspondent of the Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal* called on planters to "fix a minimum price, below which they will not sell even in case of an average crop; and we suggest 12 cents nett, as a price that will yield a fair but not extravagant remuneration." He added, if output decreased in a given year the planter should "insist on a corresponding increase in the price."¹³

Two Tallahasseans aided greatly in consummating the idea of holding a south-wide planters' convention for the purpose of establishing some control over cotton sales. They were by no means the only Southerners to promote such a gathering, but they were prominently active in bringing about the first regional convention during the 1850's. The first of these Floridians was an unknown person calling himself "Magnolia," probably either John Gamble or James E. Broome. His proposal of a convention attracted wide attention and action when it appeared in the *Southern Cultivator of Augusta, Georgia*, an agricultural journal which had the largest circulation of publications of its type in the Old South. The second Tallahasseean to be noted in the movement was Judge Broome, soon to be governor of his state, and who,

10. Columbus *Sentinel*, quoted in *Mobile Daily Advertiser*, November 13, 1850.

11. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, March 31, 1849.

12. *Soil of the South*, I (1851), 98; *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 101.

13. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, May 11, 1850.

coincidentally, became governor very shortly after participating in the planters' convention movement. Broome also had the distinction of presenting to the public a method of controlling cotton sales that came to be known as "The Florida Plan."

"Magnolia's" letter to the *Southern Cultivator* appeared in July, 1851, and after complaining about prices received for the previous year's cotton and advancing the usual "King Cotton" theory that the white staple was "the most important and indispensable of all staple crops," he launched into his reasons for a convention:

. . . let us assemble together and consult on the means necessary to protect the price, and prevent in the future the ruinous fluctuations with which we are so often visited. To effect anything, concert, to a certain extent, is necessary; and that a plan of concert may be devised and readily carried into execution, which will establish a minimum price of at least ten cents per pound; and this, too, without limiting the production; I have no doubt. I ask my cotton planting brethren to think of the subject of an assemblage this fall, which shall represent every county in the cotton growing States - I am gratified to see that in some quarters, the cotton growers are paying some attention to this subject - that there are many of them ready and willing to consult together. . . . I would travel five hundred miles at my own charge, to attend such a convention. Will one thousand, or ten thousand others do as much? If so fix the time and place, and we shall be paid a thousand times for our trouble and expense. . . . I have no desire to discuss any particular mode of proceeding to secure this great object, but will close by saying that a mode, simple, certain and effectual, can be adopted.

As far as is known, Judge Broome first presented to a large audience his own proposal of a convention in the August, 1851, issue of the *Soil of the South*, an agricultural journal of Columbus, Georgia. But the Judge's approach differed quite noticeably from that of "Magnolia." Broome and his fellow Tallahasseeans were ready for action. His statement was as follows:

The object of this communication is to say that I have for years given more or less attention to the subject of regulating the price of our great staple. The result of my reflections is that we have the power in our own hands, may exercise it with great ease, and at a positive saving annually of very many

14. *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 101.

millions of dollars, to say nothing of enhancement and regularity of price. The details of this plan are too long to be given in a letter. I shall, however, embody the outlines in a report which I shall submit to a meeting of cotton planters in this city on the 26th instant [Tallahassee, July 26, 1851] at which time we propose to appoint delegates to a Southern cotton planters convention. We are feeling considerable interest in this question here, and may I not hope that you will call the attention of cotton planters of the subject, and urge them every where to hold meetings and send delegates? Have a meeting in your county early, and fix a place and time, not later than the first of November next. No harm can result, and great good may, in my opinion, be done.

Would it not be well, if such a convention is considered desirable, to hold it during the same week with your Agricultural¹⁵ State Fair [in Macon, Georgia], and at the same place?

Editor James M. Chambers of the *Soil of the South* not only approved of Judge Broome's suggestion, but he immediately invited planters of the South to come to Macon and agreed with Broome as to the date: "We would suggest the Great Fair, to be held in Macon on the 29th, 30th and 31st of October next, as the proper time and place for the meeting. Come on, then, planters, one and all; . . . Let the press sound the tocsin, the planters will rally to the call," he said.¹⁶

Leon County planters, as Broome had stated, were indeed "feeling a considerable interest" about the cotton market in the summer of 1851. Prices in 1850-1851 had risen to about ten cents per pound, but there was a gnawing fear that they might drop to a level such as the four to five cents received in 1845. These prices of 1845 were, by the way, the lowest of the antebellum period.¹⁷ And it was with the hope of preventing both a recurrence of such prices and fluctuations in prices that a call was sent out by Judge Broome, Richard K. Call, and thirty-one other sponsors for a meeting of Leon County planters.¹⁸ In promoting the meeting, which was set for July 26, a local editor hoped that

15. *Soil of the South*, II (1851), 118. See also *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 122.

16. *Soil of the South*, II (1851), 118.

17. *DeBow's Review*, XXII (1857), 212, XXIII (1857), 367.

18. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, July 15, 1851; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, July 12, 1851.

the planters could do something to stabilize prices, for, as he concluded,

These fluctuations produce untold evils beyond the mere loss of money. They unsettle every thing - impart their own character to every interest - affect injuriously the habits and morals of our people - and keep us moving from the extreme rash and extravagant speculation to that of over caution, timidity and distrust. We get from fever heat to below zero, perhaps in a month, and the calculations of no one week will answer for the next. All interests partake of this gambling character, and assuredly it is good for no people to be the sport of fortune to such a degree as the cotton growing South always have been.

The July 26 meeting of Leon County planters, which met at the courthouse in Tallahassee, selected Colonel Robert Butler as president, Colonel John Parkhill and Doctor G. W. Holland as vice-presidents, and B. F. Allen as secretary. A committee consisting of Edward Houstoun, T. K. Leonard, Richard Hayward, George Whitfield, and Judge Broome as chairman, was appointed by Colonel Butler "to present business to the meeting." As reported locally, "The committee retired for a few moments," and, with Broome acting as spokesman, made its report.²⁰

The committee's report was an amazing thing for its time and place; it indicated that a great amount of preparation had preceded the meeting; it contained much that was old and much that was new. Cotton planters, Judge Broome proclaimed, were subject to more difficulties and hazards than any other "interest in the world." Production was irregular, which resulted in great fluctuations in price. Since consumption of cotton through the years had kept pace with production, said Broome, "the extent of consumption up to this time, has been controlled by the extent of production, and we must," he concluded, "therefore look to other causes for the ruinous depressions in price, to which we have so often submitted." His second point concerned what he termed "the capacity of the world for overproduction." Speaking to this point, he said, "To this your Committee concedes there cannot be a definite answer given; they [the members of the committee] incline,

19. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, July 15, 1851.

20. Official accounts of the proceedings of the meeting may be found in *ibid.*, August 5, 1851, and in Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, August 2, 1851.

however, strongly to the opinion that, at fair prices and with proper organization on the part of the American cotton planters, the capacity for over production does not and never can exist."

Quoting figures from *Hunt's Merchant's Magazine* of New York City, which was the leading commercial publication in the country, Broome next stated that the annual increase in American cotton production had been declining about three per cent per year. "Not so, however, with American consumption," he added, for "that had increased, in the same time, more than nine per cent per annum . . ." He was of the opinion that "The rate of production must be increased, or the consumption diminished - [and thus] the equilibrium, will be found." But, he said, he could not agree with the explanation that price fluctuations through the years had been caused by overproduction. However, he did believe that prices went up and down for two other reasons: irregular production and the selfish machinations of cotton manufacturers. Irregular production, he reiterated, could not be prevented, but it is as well as the procedure of selling cotton to factors and manufacturers could be controlled; and the planter had a way of obtaining a just price. This, he said, was the gist of the problem; and he had to answer to it. His method of attaining an "equilibrium," that is, his "Florida Plan," was, briefly, as follows:

. . . Irregular production, it is conceded, cannot be prevented, but your committee think that organized concert of action will control its effects.

If we would do any thing certainly and effectively, we must organize a Cotton Planters' Association. This should be chartered by the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Florida, with a capital of at least \$20,000,000, to be increased in amount as the wants of the business might require. The Association should erect or purchase extensive warehouses in Charleston Savannah, Mobile, New Orleans, Apalachicola and St. Marks, and establish at each of these points a regular commission business, with a view to the storage and sale of the entire crop of the United States.

For the purpose of securing to themselves the whole cotton commission business, they should establish a minimum price, which for the purposes of this argument, we will fix at 10 to 12 cents, according to quality and location. This should be guaranteed to all their regular customers, and to all parties holding cotton purchased of them, so long as the

said cotton remained in their warehouses. The world should have notice that, whenever the cotton offering was not wanted by others, at or above the fixed minimum price, it would never be re-sold, until taken at cost, adding storage, insurance, interest on the investment with a commission for purchasing, and another for selling.

Arguing further for his "Plan," Broome stated that the manufacturer would have to come to "our warehouses for his supplies," with the result, he maintained, that "the intermediate markets and agents" would be eliminated. Under such a system, he said, the southern planter would benefit approximately \$25,000,000 on a crop of 1,250,000 bales through savings on drayage, brokerage, and commission fees.

Closing out his report, Broome offered and the meeting adopted three resolutions which it was believed would help implement his "Plan." The resolutions were:

Resolved, That the great irregularity, and continued tendency to reduction of price of our great Southern staple, are evils which require investigation, and the application of a remedy, if one can be found.

Resolved, That, in the opinion of this meeting, nothing is likely to be accomplished for the benefit of our interest, without a reasonable amount of concert of action among cotton planters.

Resolved, That, with a view to obtaining such concert of action, we respectfully call on the cotton planters of the Southern States to assemble in Convention at Macon, Georgia, on Monday 27th day of October next, or at such time and place as may be most convenient to a majority of those who may desire to be represented, and that this meeting appoint delegates to the same.

After appointing forty-four delegates to the Macon convention and making provisions for the establishment of a so-called Central Association of the Cotton Planters of Florida, the Tallahassee meeting adjourned.²¹ A local editor reported, "The meeting was well attended, and very great interest was manifested in its objects."²²

21. For other accounts of the Tallahassee meeting, see *DeBow's Review*, XI (1851), 497-504; *Soil of the South*, I (1851), 130-131; *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 139-141.

22. Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, August 2, 1851.

In the interval between the Tallahassee meeting in July and the Macon planters' convention in October, 1851, there developed a sharp debate over the "Florida Plan." However, there was a somewhat general agreement that a south-wide planters' convention would serve excellent purposes. *DeBow's Review*, in reporting on the Tallahassee meeting, stated, "We agree entirely as to the importance of a Convention of the Planters of the South, though we are not yet prepared to say how far the [Florida] plan . . . may be practicable or achieve the desired results."²³ Daniel Lee, the editor of the *Southern Cultivator*, considered the "Florida Plan" to be "impracticable" because, as he put it, "The Cotton planters are too numerous, scattered over too large a district of country, with interests and conditions (pecuniarily) too varied and diversified to afford ground for the indulgence of a reasonable hope, that any concert of action can be possibly produced," but he added, "we are by no means opposed to the organization of a Planters' Convention, for it may in other respects be productive of much good, if the energies of the body be properly directed." As to "proper direction," said Lee, the convention should encourage agricultural improvement, the increased circulation of agricultural journals, the investment of surplus capital in manufacturing, and thereby create a self-sufficient South.²⁴ Editor Chambers, of the *Soil of the South*, gave his mixed blessing to the "Plan" and to the convention, saying, "To our Florida friends belongs the honor of originating this project; the thought is now the property of the country."²⁵ He believed, however, that production and price could not be "regulated with any thing like certainty in all its details We propose no monopoly; we ask not legislative interference; we seek no tariff for protections, but [that we] consult how we shall best use the means for turning to the best account the blessings, so rich and varied, peculiar to our own soil of the South. Let the proposition then receive the consideration which its importance demands."²⁶

The pros and cons of the "Plan" also were debated in many newspapers during the late summer and fall of 1851, much ink was expended on the subject, particularly in Florida, Georgia, Ala-

23. *DeBow's Review*, XI (1851), 497.

24. *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 122.

25. *Soil of the South*, I (1851), 139.

26. *Ibid.*

bama, New York City, Washington, D. C., and Liverpool.²⁷ Most editors, including one in Tallahassee,²⁸ were extremely critical of the "Plan," but of all the attacks the most caustic seems to have been the following one in the *New York Times*:

The seasons will have to be adjusted so that due proportions of wet and dry weather shall alternate at proper intervals; a treaty must be made with the army and boll worm and other entomological speculators in cotton; the fluctuations of money values will have to be set forever at rest, and a fixed rate of consumption dictated to and forced upon the world. Can the Cotton Convention manage this? Can it regulate the tide? or lay down the laws of the wind? or oblige the Gulf Stream to run the other way? Unless it can, the price of cotton is likely, we fear, to continue its old-fashioned mutability.²⁹

The Macon convention of October, 1851, was attended by delegates from Georgia, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas; and of the 261 delegates, Florida furnished 19. Florida played a leading role, however, for the president of the convention, ex-Governor William Moseley, came from that state. Also present from Florida were Judge Broome and John Gamble, and both of them were active participants in the meeting.

To say the least, the "Florida Plan" was poorly received by the majority of the delegates at the convention. Every person who spoke was quite positive that the southern planter was being mistreated in one way or another by businessmen of the world and that the South ought to protect itself somehow against these businessmen. But the delegates could not agree as to a method of protection or to the procedure they should follow. Thus the convention made few accomplishments. One reason for this was that the delegates turned their thoughts to the fetish of direct trade

27. See Jordan, "Cotton Planters' Conventions in the Old South," *loc. cit.*, 327.
28. For some exceedingly severe criticisms of the "Plan," see Tallahassee *Sentinel*, August 5, 12, 19, 26, 1851, especially those of "X. S.," a correspondent of the *Sentinel*. This writer charged that Broome's Report was most confusing and that the Judge's figures on cotton production were unreliable: "Possibly they were obtained from the Moon - being the nearest planet, and as there seems to be a good deal of moon-shine about the Report." *Ibid.*, August 5, 1851.
29. *New York Times*, quoted in *Daily Chronicle & Sentinel*, October 23, 1851, of Augusta, Georgia.

between the South and Europe. An adventurer by the name of Charles Goethe Baylor, who was the American consul at Amsterdam, turned up at the meeting, made a stirring and audacious speech on direct trade, and created so much excitement on that subject that the majority of the convention repudiated the "Florida Plan" and agreed to work for the promotion of direct trade instead of the "Plan" in an effort to advance southern interests. John Gamble, who had not participated in the Tallahassee meeting of July, 1851, also created turmoil among the advocates of the "Plan" by suggesting an alternative organization to the Cotton Planters' Association as proposed by Judge Broome. Gamble's suggestion, which was approved by the Macon convention, called for the establishment of county agricultural societies throughout the South, their chief function to be to examine crops in their counties and to submit statistics to a central executive committee. This central committee would serve as a sort of information bureau for planters of the South and furnish them with some idea of what to expect concerning the over-all cotton crop each year. However, despite the activities of Baylor and Gamble, Judge Broome still gained the satisfaction of having his "plan" officially adopted by a minority of the convention. This came about in a peculiar way. The majority of the delegates literally grew tired of listening to Broome and his supporters, all but about forty die-hard supporters of Broome walked out of the convention, and the remaining group adopted the "Florida Plan." This group also claimed that it was acting for the convention, but just before it adjourned it agreed that the delegates should not consider themselves bound to adhere to the "Plan." Thus, the convention, in regard to the "Plan," was quite obviously a fiasco. The "plan" was never put into operation, of course.³⁰

But this was not the end of the matter. The press was by no means through discussing the "Plan," and proceeded for several years after 1851 to ridicule, blast, malign, and shame it and its

30. *Alabama Planter*, V (1851), 388; *Augusta Daily Chronicle & Sentinel*, October 18, 29, November 1, 4, 5, 1851; *DeBow's Review*, XI (1851), 683-684, XII (1852), 121-126, 275-279; *Macon Georgia Citizen*, November 8, 1851; *Macon Georgia Journal and Messenger*, October 29, 1851; *Macon Georgia Telegraph*, November 18, 25, 1851; *Mobile Daily Advertiser*, November 7, 9, 11, 1851; *Savannah Daily Republican*, November 1, 3, 5, 1851; *Soil of the South*, I (1851), 152-155, 159, 177, 183; *Southern Cultivator*, IX (1851), 156-157, 161-164.

proponents. It was, for example, compared to the South Sea Scheme of the English, the Mississippi Scheme of the French, and described as the work of “a moon-struck man,” Quixotic, a hocus-pocus, and “a very great error,” among other diatribes. Eventually, however, the “Florida Plan” brought some interesting results, not all good, but at least interesting. The Macon convention of 1851, which in reality resulted from the original proposal of the men of Leon County, helped lay plans for another convention to be held in Macon in October, 1852. Again the planters could not agree, but at this meeting, which attracted delegates from eight states, provisions were made for a third convention. This latter group organized a so-called Agricultural Association of the Cotton Planting States while in session at Montgomery, Alabama; the Association sponsored a magnificent meeting in Columbia, South Carolina, in December, 1853, at which time one of the most outstanding groups of papers on scientific farming was presented in the history of the Old South; and in 1854 the Association merged its activities with those of the commercial conventions.³¹

Many of the participants in the planters' conventions took leading roles in the commercial conventions after they affiliated with the latter organization. And that the leaders of the planters' conventions had much in common with the leaders of the commercial conventions is shown by the official invitation that the planters sent out for their Macon convention of October, 1852. It will be recalled that the main purpose of this meeting was to organize an association of planters. The purpose of such an association, it was said, was to improve agriculture; to develop resources and “unite and combine the energies of the slave-holding States, . . . ; to establish and fortify a public opinion within our borders, . . . ;” to rear southern children at home and develop among them “industry and cultivated and refined tastes;” to promote mechanic arts “directly and indirectly auxiliary to agriculture;” to encourage direct trade with Europe; to develop a common school system “which will make Christians as well as scholars of our children;” and to prepare the Negro for freedom, that is, to civilize and Christianize him, but not to free him until “slavery have fulfilled its beneficent mission in these states, . . .”³²

31. See Jordan, “Cotton Planters' Conventions in the Old South,” *loc. cit.*, 331-344.

32. *Soil of the South*, II (1852), 324-325.

These objectives of the planters were the same as those which were expressed in the meetings of the commercial conventions of the 1850's. Indeed, it is quite probable that the commercial conventions borrowed many of their ideas from the planters' conventions.

It is quite obvious that the planters conventions were very significant in encouraging southern nationalism. Probably of most significance, however, was their encouragement of the establishment of agricultural societies and fairs and an agricultural press, all of which aided in the promotion of better farming practices in the Old South. It was due to their efforts, in part, that agriculture, not cotton, became "king" in the region. In Leon County, Florida, for example, planters made their plans for a state agricultural society and a state fair almost immediately after the failure of their "Florida Plan" at the 1851 planters' convention in Macon, Georgia;³³ and this was more than a coincidence. The activities of Gamble, Broome, and their colleagues in behalf of agriculture thus had some very beneficial results, and helped Florida take an active role in the agricultural revolution which was coming about in the United States in the late ante-bellum period.³⁴

33. Tallahassee *Florida Sentinel*, November 18, 1851; Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, November 22, December 20, 1851.

34. Louis B. Schmidt, "The Agricultural Revolution in the United States, 1860-1930," *Science*, LXII (1930), 585-594.