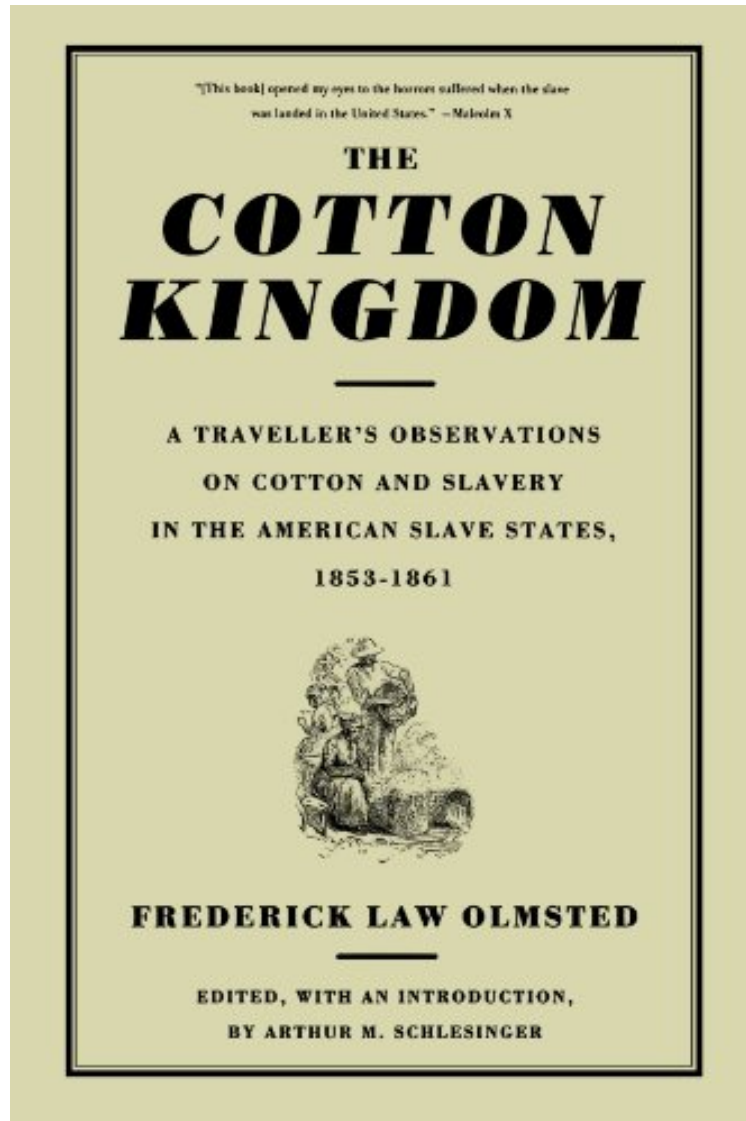


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## The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations On Cotton And Slavery In The American Slave States, 1853-1861

*Frederick Law Olmsted*

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Frederick Law Olmsted : The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations On Cotton And Slavery In The American Slave States, 1853-1861 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time,

and all praised *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations On Cotton And Slavery In The American Slave States, 1853-1861*:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very pleased  
By Frank Lazenby  
Great book, just as advertised and a very good look at the period when cotton was king in the south.  
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is like time travel  
By William  
What a wonderful experience for me to read this. It is much like a Paul Theroux travel book only more full of down to earth content. I really got to feeling like I was accompanying the author. For every morsel of opinion there are ten of actual experience and dialog. And he catches it all, the relationship with his horse, with the landscape, the weather, the houses and fields, and of course the main thrust is the people he meets.  
A step back: The author is a New York Times reporter who travels through the southern slave states prior to the Civil War. He's just following the roads on his horse and inquiring for a place to stay as evening approaches. Staying mostly in peoples homes, not public lodging. He carries with him a strong focus on the economics of where he visits and the way slave labor works into everything. He wants to understand slavery from the perspective of those he encounters, and he is effective at soliciting lots of commentary. The majority of the conversations are with the white people, many of whom own slaves. But there are also some good back and forths with the blacks, primarily but not exclusively slaves.  
I've learned so much here about the texture of how slavery was experienced in the south. It is not one dimensional, there are all sorts of people with pros and cons and expressions of the negative effects. This is not edited material, there is not an effort to convince the reader in any way. I could talk a lot here about the surprising things I've learned, but that's of little value. Please read it yourself.  
3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Eye-witness Account, A Real Eye opener  
By H. Monshaw  
The Cotton Kingdom; A Travelers Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States. Based upon Three former volumes of journeys and investigations by the same author. In two volumes Vol 1 1861 Edited with an introduction by Arthur Schlesinger 1953 In 1852 Olmsted, a special correspondent for the now New York Times, traveled by horse through the southern slave states staying primarily at plantations. The plantations vary from small to large both in acreage and number of workers, primarily slaves, some free blacks and white. He reflects how poorly the people live both culturally and physically in comparison to northern owners and workers. He surmises that because the plantations are so spread apart normal town amenities such as schools, churches, libraries and newspapers are rare. He continues that this isolation also leads to tight-knit families as there is little other social entertainment. He gives the reader a picture of the Souths plantationslow on hospitality, energy, food variety, literacy and good agricultural practices.  
Olmstead comments on the condition of the often dilapidated main houses, of poor quality and variety of foodprimarily bacon, cornbread and molasses sometimes coffee, and of squalid travelers sleeping accommodations. He describes how the people live, their clothing, their tools, crops and soil conditions. Male slave workers looked in good condition as they were very valuable assets and aside from field labor they could be rented out or sold. However, women were valued for their slave production; Virginia being the largest producers. Even with slaves, work wasnt done well or quicklythus crop production suffered. He discusses at length the economics of growing cotton, cost of slaves etc. by observation and U. S. governments statistics. At the end of the book, along with much philosophical verbiage, he concludes that slavery not only is economically and morally harmful but is so equally to both owners and slaves.  
Appendices A. The Conditions of VirginiaStatistics. B. The Slave Trade in Virginia (A day of slave tradingreviewers note). C. Cost of Labor in the Border States. D. Statistics of the Georgia Seaboard. E. Olmsted on the Northern and Southern Characters. Editors Appendix: F. General Bibliography. 625+pp. No drawings, no maps, often no names of places where Olmsted visits. Sometimes repetitive and verbose. I highly recommend this book, an eyewitness account, of the conditions in the South just prior to the Civil War.

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) is best known for designing parks in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Chicago, Boston, and the grounds of the Capitol in Washington. But before he embarked upon his career as the nation's foremost landscape architect, he was a correspondent for the *New York Times*, and it was under its auspices that he journeyed through the slave states in the 1850s. His day-by-day observationsincluding intimate accounts of the daily lives of masters and slaves, the operation of the plantation system, and the pernicious effects of slavery on all classes of society, black and whitewere largely collected in *The Cotton Kingdom*. Published in 1861, just as the Southern states were storming out of the Union, it has been hailed ever since as singularly fair and authentic, an unparalleled account of America's "peculiar institution."

From the Back Cover  
Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) is best known for designing New York City's Central Park, and parks in Brooklyn, Chicago, Boston, and Washington. But before he embarked upon his career as the nation's foremost landscape architect, he was a correspondent for *The New York Times*, and it was under its auspices that he journeyed through the slave states in the 1850s. His day-by-day observations - including intimate accounts of the daily lives of masters and slaves, the operation of the plantation system, and the pernicious effects of slaves on all classes of society, black and white - were largely collected in *The Cotton Kingdom*. Published in 1861, just as the Southern states were storming out of the Union, it has been hailed ever since as singularly fair and authentic, an unparalleled account

of America's "peculiar institution".About the Author1822-1903