

check this, they maintain, would injure the negroes as much as their masters. When they are forced to part with slaves, they usually sell one to another, and are unwilling to dispose of them to a stranger. It is reckoned, indeed, quite a disgrace to a negro to be so discarded. When the former master bids for one of his "own people," at a sale of property forced on by debt, the public are unwilling to bid against him. It is clear, therefore, that a dealer must traffic in the lowest and most good-for-nothing class of laborers, many of whom, in Europe, would be in the hands of policemen, or in convict ships on their way to a penal settlement. I heard of one of these dealers, who, having made a large fortune, lived sumptuously in one of the towns on the Mississippi after retiring from business, but in spite of some influential connections, he was not able to make his way into the best society of the place.

At the mouth of the Savannah River we passed Cockspur Island, where there is a fort. The sea is said to have encroached many hundred yards on this island since 1740, as has happened at other points on this low coast; but there has been also a gain of land in many places. An officer stationed at the fort told me, that when a moat was dug and the sea-water admitted, oysters grew there so fast, that, at the end of two years, they afforded a regular supply of that luxury to the garrison. The species of oyster which is so abundant here (*Ostrea virginica*) resembles our European *Ostrea edulis* in shape, when it lives isolated and grows freely under water; but those individuals which live gregariously, or on banks between high and low water, lose their round form and are greatly lengthened. They are called racoon oysters, because they are the only ones which the racoons can get at when they come down to feed at low tide. Capt. Alexander, of the U.S. artillery, told me that, in the summer of 1844, he saw a large bald-headed eagle, *Aquila leucocephala*, which might measure six feet from tip to tip of its extended wings, caught near the bar of the Savannah river by one of these racoon oysters. The eagle had perched upon the shellfish to prey upon it, when the mollusk suddenly closed its valves and shut in the bird's claw, and would have detained its enemy till the rising tide had come up and drowned it, had not the cap-