

CHAPTER XXV.

Voyage from Mobile to Tuscaloosa.—Visit to the Coal-Field of Alabama.—Its Agreement in Age with the ancient Coal of Europe.—Absenteeism in Southern States.—Progress of Negroes.—Unthriftiness of Slave-Labor.—University of Tuscaloosa.—Churches.—Bankruptcies.—Judges and Law Courts.—Geology on the Tombeckbee River.—Artesian Wells.—Limestone Bluff of St. Stephen's.—Negro shot by Overseer.—Involuntary Efforts of the Whites to civilize the Negroes.—New Statute in Georgia against Black Mechanics.—The Effects of speedy Emancipation and the free Competition of White and Black Laborers considered.

Feb. 8, 1846.—THE Tuscaloosa steamer was just ready to sail the next morning for Mobile, up the great western tributary of the Alabama, called the Tombeckbee (or more familiarly "the Bigby"); I determined, therefore, to embark in her for the capital of the state, about 400 miles distant by water to the north, where I wished to explore the coal-field in which the coal used for gas and fuel at Mobile is procured, and to ascertain its geological age. Our steamer was 170 feet long, and made about ten miles an hour against the stream. She carried stores of all kinds to the upper country, but was not heavily laden; and, on her return, is to bring down a large freight of cotton. By means of the high-pressure principle and the horizontal movement of the piston, she draws only a few feet of water, notwithstanding her great length. These steamers never appear to such advantage as when stemming an adverse current, for the boat can then be steered with more precision, and less time is lost at the landings; at each of these they can go up direct to the bank, whereas, in descending, they have to turn round and re-ascend the stream before they can stop. There were also rafts laden with huge piles of wood ready to be taken in tow at different points, the logs being thrown on board by our negroes, while the steamer was going on at full speed. The empty raft is then turned adrift, and is easily piloted down the stream by two men, a ma-