DRIVERS AND OVERSEERS

On large plantations the work of the slaves was supervised by a driver, or an overseer, or both. The driver was a Negro slave himself, selected to boss the others because of his intelligence, his ability as a leader, and also his ability to carry out orders of his master. The overseer of a plantation was a white man who managed the plantation affairs, including the workers. Most overseers were Southerners. Very rarely did a Northerner get a position as overseer. This was because the plantation owner wanted an overseer who had had years of experience in the problems of the plantation and its workers.

In age overseers ranged from 17 to 60, but most of them were young men between 20 and 25, according to the historian, James B. Sellers. Sometimes an overseer worked on a percentage of the crop. At other times he received a fixed salary (payable when the cotton was sold), such as $400 per year plus his room and board. The master supervised both the driver and the overseer. Occasionally a master had a pair of binoculars and watched distant workers from the upper story of his plantation house. Thus the stage was set for some lazy field hand who went to sleep beside his job to get the surprise of his life from the master who had been watching him with the field glasses.

FIELD HANDS AND DOMESTIC SERVANTS

The two principal divisions of Negro slaves were field hands and domestic servants. The work of the domestic servants depended, of course, upon the size of the plantation house and the wealth of the master. The servants recognized some of the jobs as carrying more prestige than others, such as that of butler, seamstress, nurse, coachman, or cook. However, most