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Book Review: James Henry Hammond and the Old South, by Drew Gilpin Faust

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JAMES HENRY HAMMOND AND THE OLD SOUTH by
Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University
Press, 1982) 397 pp., \$27.50

It is not very often that I highly recommend a book that almost literally makes me sick. The life of this man is downright sordid; unfortunately damning, at least to me, the antebellum society which he both represented and helped to maintain.

Drew Gilpin Faust, chairman of the Department of American Civilization of the University of Pennsylvania, has provided a first-rate biography of this man of humble origins who married into wealth (acquiring a plantation and many slaves), became one of the wealthiest men of South Carolina, and served in the United States House of Representatives and as Governor of South Carolina.

A man who had insatiable ambition, an ambition which clouded everything he did and eventually consumed him, he was determined to absolutely control his life and everything about him. This meant complete control over all about him, especially his slaves. Ms. Faust excerpts part of his will in which he tells his son not to sell certain listed slaves (Sally Johnson and her daughter and some of their offspring), for they were his mistresses and children. Further, he reminds the son that the mistresses were also used by the son.

Enough said—but for a better understanding of one major example of plantation life in the antebellum South, this book should be read and studied.

EDITOR