6

"A Makeshift Kind of Life"

Free Women and Free Homes

> I think I was very foolish last month to make up beds and wash soiled dishes. I began seriously to think that it was in very bad taste to have three meals in one day and wondered at the rapidity with which my homely but necessary duties followed each other and if I had dessert, or the plates were changed, seriously considered the subject in a new light, as so many more dishes to wash.
>
> Gertrude Thomas, employer

> Celestine *left suddenly* taking Rosella with her without any provocation from me or *notification* to me.
>
> Tryphena Fox, employer

> Mrs. Wms has engaged Anna for a cook.... She used to be about us when we lived at Gravel Hill and was a very good woman, but they have all changed so she may not be worth much now.
>
> Sarah Palmer Williams, employer

> Cretia is the comfort – animal comfort – of my every day life.
>
> Mary Pringle, employer

"I have such a nice servant in Katy," Elizabeth Porcher wrote to her sister in 1866. "She is a nice washer and a good cook and has a little girl of Annie's size who helps a good deal and I am to give her $8. I really hope I am at last comfortably fixed. I never have to show her anything hardly and she is so humble and civil."[1] In the coming years, Porcher would see that prospect dissipate bit by bit. She would see her share of poverty and servants not so "nice" or "humble." The labor troubles of 1865–66 marked a beginning, not an end, to strife within the plantation household. Over the coming decades, the plantation household would be thoroughly transformed. Elizabeth Porcher's

[1] Elizabeth Porcher Palmer to Harriett R. Palmer, August 6, 1866, in *A World Turned Upside Down: The Palmers of South Santee, 1818–1881*, ed. Louis P. Towles (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 528.

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experience exemplifies that transformation. Although economic problems and political turmoil certainly were influential, the resistance of black women to a restoration of the plantation household's prewar labor relations played a notable role in its postwar reconstitution.

From 1866 through the 1880s, tasked work remained a visible hallmark of the strategies black women employed to institute free labor relations in domestic employment. This chapter explores the connections between tasked work, black and white women's part-time employment, and their efforts to build free homes. Taking on jobs by the task and working part-time as day or casual labor allowed household servants precious time for their own domestic production and moved white women employers toward a new order in labor relations in the domestic sphere. For a time, the pedestal of white womanhood was cracked. Former mistresses worked, and black women suffered far less violence than previously.[2]

Part-time and tasked domestic work gave black women the flexibility to live larger lives. They could decide to devote a part of their labor to their families' crops, to work at home for themselves and their families, or simply to have more time to themselves. Their struggle to put planter homes and planter women on free ground and to build their own free homes and lives widened after the first year of freedom. Freedwomen continued to give priority to securing the right to manage their own time and to establish fair rates for their labor. In the process, they forced former mistresses to accommodations that were previously unimaginable. None of the new arrangements appeared magically or inevitably. Women who left plantation households had reasons enough, but, for most, there was hardly any clarity about what shape the future would take. When Leah appeared on Thomas's doorstep to apply for a job as cook, she took as big a step into the unknown as Thomas did in advertising the position. Women with children would have been deeply torn, not knowing how they would feed or house them with or without the help of a husband. Still, it must have been tremendously liberating to leave without saying goodbye, to leave ironing that needed to be done and meals uncooked, to walk away in a mistress's gown, to confiscate her bed, or to return for one's child or property in the company of U.S. soldiers. None of these things, however, could in and of themselves translate into a free home or life with its own security, autonomy, and privacy. This, black women would have thought about in the midst of savoring the liberating moments of freedom.

Regardless of the place or circumstance in which freedwomen found themselves, the practical work of figuring out what they must do to have the kind of life they thought freedom promised took time, and was worked out by trial and error. How many wash jobs would it take to put food on the table, buy a setting hen, or a new dress? How many days' work in someone else's kitchen? How would small children be cared for when parents worked? How much family labor was required to make a bale of cotton? Other matters seemed

[2] That violence would never resurface at the prewar level, and much of what did was transferred to the hands of white men.

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straightforward enough. Freedom meant being able to visit extended family and friends without a pass, to attend parties and spend time with lovers without having to sneak away. It meant privacy in the home.

For women who worked in the plantation household, part-time and task work offered the greatest possibility for living freer lives, and they were forms of labor with which black women were familiar. From the outset, therefore, black women favored part-time and task work for the flexibility they offered. Still, it was clear that any hope for any semblance of financial independence lay in the fields that their labor had enriched during slavery. Domestic workers saw this as clearly as field hands. For domestic servants, an additional advantage to field labor was in its physical distance from white homes. When they could choose, freedwomen evinced a decided preference for field work. But it was never as simple a matter as that. Field labor might be more attractive from the standpoint of distance from former owners and in the end more profitable, but black women and their families needed immediate resources to help sustain them as crops were being made.

A multiplicity of arrangements emerged to meet individual and family needs. Some women committed two to three hours per day; some, one, two, or three days per week to waged domestic work, setting aside the remainder of their working hours for work in family fields, the crops of white planters, or for production in their own homes.[3] They fought to keep planters and their wives from encroaching on uncontracted time, just as they fought to maintain a clear understanding of what work they had contracted to do.[4] A woman hired as a cook could find herself having to ward off both threats.

For many, the most logical option under the circumstances was to split their time between field labor and domestic service. This was the decision Lucy and Andrew made, to spend three days in the field and two in paid household work. Another option was to devote a portion of each work day to household labor and field labor. For example, some black women went to the fields after completing their jobs in white homes.[5] The field work might be in their own vegetable gardens, corn or cotton patches, or in planters' fields. Some freedwomen negotiated a day off each week to devote to field labor. Whites who balked at allowing these sorts of arrangements risked losing their domestic workers entirely. Refused the right to go to their corn or cotton fields on their day off, black women often resigned household employment. Employers would then complain that they were setting up for themselves, or that husbands and fathers were carrying them off, saying their wives and daughters were not to work anymore. Former mistresses tried to avoid these sorts of arrangements in the first place, because they gave black women greater independence, making

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[3] On the two- and three-day system, see Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

[4] Isabelle H. Ward to Mr. [Louis] Manigault, January 26, 1869, Louis Manigault Papers, DU.

[5] Elizabeth P. Porcher to Philip E. Porcher, March 23, 1865, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 452.

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them less reliant on household labor. All of this is best understood in the context of black women's determination to decide for themselves what a free life meant.[6]

Former mistresses eventually yielded to the new realities, but not without a fight and often still believing that, in the end, they would be victorious. Esther Simons Palmer unhappily agreed to part-time arrangements in the hope of forestalling the arrival of a domestic revolution on her doorstep. She did not forestall the worst. In 1866 and 1867, freedwomen who had been her slaves for decades left one by one. Palmer tried without success to stay the tide. In March 1865, Lucy had reduced her hours in Palmer's household in order to have more time to work in the field, for herself and her family. In 1867 she left for good.[7]

Without their traditional command of labor seven days a week, former mistresses were forced to accept a quiltwork pattern of labor arrangements to keep house, albeit in "a very unsatisfying way." Esther Palmer found herself making do with a constantly changing staff, trying to convince each in turn to do more than they were hired to do. When Sarah left, Silvy, Lucy's washing assistant, became the cook and Tenny became Lucy's assistant. Esia was brought up from the quarters to make the fires, carry water, and cut wood. Andrew, who in 1865 had negotiated to work for Palmer two days a week and have the rest of his time to work in the field, now offered to work full-time for $100.00 for the year. His wife, Bella, would wash and wait on two of Palmer's nieces (ages 20 and 22) and some younger male relatives for $7 per month. This arrangement, too, was short-lived, for "after a while Bella and Andrew thought they could do better in the field, so the girls got Hester."[8] And so it went.

But the new demands of housekeeping that proved so unsatisfactory to white women did not make for a utopia for freedwomen. The disarray white women charted in their own homes also maps the disarray in black homes. The constant staffing changes white women encountered suggest something of the uncertainty that dogged black women's lives as well. With little in the way of resources at their disposal, beyond control over their labor, freedwomen had no choice but to pursue a patchwork of arrangements. They looked to such arrangements to help them make ends meet and, simultaneously, to secure some degree of autonomy from white households. But there were no guarantees and, certainly, the lives of black women remained fractured and hard.

Black women found that accomplishing their objectives was never as easy as white commentators sometimes made it seem. They had to juggle family obligations and, at the same time protect their children's freedom along with

[6] Louisa P. Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, April 19, 1866; Esther Simons Palmer to Elizabeth P. Porcher, March 11, 1866; Elizabeth Catherine Porcher to Harriet R. Palmer, January 22, 1870, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 507, 503, and 641.

[7] Esther Simons Palmer to Elizabeth P. Porcher, March 11, 1866, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 503. Lucy left the Palmer household at the end of 1867. (Esther Simon Palmer to Elizabeth Palmer Porcher, December 29, 1867, p. 574.)

[8] Esther Simons Palmer to Elizabeth P. Porcher, March 11, 1866, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 503.

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their own. For example, when Lucy decided to stay on as Palmer's washer, she sent her children away with Peggy. Sometimes, however, black women had no choice but to put their children to work elsewhere. In either case, it freed the children from the "yard," where as slaves they had been available to slaveholders' every need and where many former mistresses still counted on having them. Harriet Palmer expressed outrage and exasperation when the mother of two other children decided to remove them from her yard: "This morning Gabriella came to little Peggy and ordered her to go to the field. Did the same to Lizza. What presumption."[9] Single mothers were especially vulnerable. When Hannah, the mother of two children, was hired to take charge of Gertrude Thomas's dairy, she left her oldest child with her former mistress, bringing her two-year-old child with her. She was pregnant with a third child when Thomas hired and fired her.[10] Thomas said she was "sorry for her." For Hannah, it meant loss of income as one of the sacrifices she bore to secure her vision of freedom.

When She Gets Thro With Her Crop

Despite the humiliations and low wages that paid housework entailed, it offered ready, if meager, cash and thus was often vital to fragile black household economies.[11] In the long term, with some employers offering wages for domestic work in allotments of corn or other foodstuffs, and cash wages hovering around two to five dollars per month, domestic workers most often had to work two jobs whether they wished to or not. The need to juggle domestic work with field work (generally better paid) was a major factor in the desire of women domestic workers to work only part-time in white homes. Even though this juggling was a response to the wage differential, and to the need for clear cash, some women nonetheless rejected the small infusion of cash or corn some employers offered for domestic work. They refused such offers, believing that their labor should bring in more than a diet of corn or minimal shelter, no better than they had as slaves. Maria and her husband Robert typified this

[9] Harriet S. Palmer Journal, March 15, 1865, Palmer Family Papers, SCL.

[10] Virginia Ingraham Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Thomas, 1848–49* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), June 20, 1869, p. 319. Arranging child care was one of the new dilemmas black women faced. During slavery, the children of domestic slaves usually lived with their mothers "in the yard" or were cared for by relatives or elderly women specifically assigned to this task. Freedwomen with children who hired themselves out as domestic workers had to make their own arrangements for child care. Some white employers saw children as a distraction while others saw them as so many "free" hands to be called on as desired. Domestic workers sometimes still brought their children along. Sometimes they left them in the care of husbands or other family members; sometimes they placed them with former owners in return for mere subsistence. (Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 14, 1869, p. 316, and June 20, 1869, p. 319).

[11] For an illuminating discussion of the importance of domestic economies in black tenant households, see Sharon Ann Holt, *Making Freedom Pay: North Carolina Freedpeople Working for Themselves* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

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pattern. They left domestic work, their former mistress explained, because "they could not make out on what I offered." When offered food, clothing, and two dollars a month, another woman refused for the same reason.[12]

In the effort to piece together a livelihood, freedwomen, like freedmen, moved back and forth between "paid" labor and independent labor, establishing patterns that persisted into the 1870s and 1880s and beyond. Mollie Edmonds worked as a washer and ironer three days of the week and in the field three days. "That is what I is done all my life," she stated.[13] When work was required in family fields, whether owned, rented, or sharecropped, black women often left domestic employment temporarily. While some freedwomen secured arrangements upfront that allowed them to devote two to three days to independent labor, others left domestic employment as the crops demanded.

There was little white women could do to prevent black women from leaving to pick cash crops or peas for local planters, or to work land cultivated by their own families.[14] When the sugar cane or cotton crops came in, black women turned to the fields for the higher wages available there. When wages in the Louisiana cane fields hit seventy-five cents a day, three times the most common wage paid to household workers, domestic workers disappeared from white households.[15] Field labor offered another important advantage; it bred the sense of pride and autonomy vividly captured in the message Flora sent to her former mistress. She was "very sorry" to learn that her former mistress was doing her own laundry. She did not, however, offer to go to her aid. She did promise to pay her former mistress a visit "when she gets thro with her crop."[16] Flora had her own priorities, and freedom meant that she could place them above the needs of her former mistress.

While the bargaining power of domestic workers was partly a function of demand, it was also intimately tied to the prevailing terms in staple crop production. Labor shortages in the rice districts of South Carolina forced planters to negotiate contracts more favorable to laborers, and the widespread use of cash wages (as opposed to share wages) as a mode of payment gave workers ready cash and therefore greater control over their household economies. At Gowrie Plantation, James B. Heyward paid in cash, the amount varying according to the difficulty of the task. For 1876, he planned to offer fifty cents per day with no rations, for light labor in the rice fields, such as picking the indigo out of the rice, sixty cents plus rations for work on the thin rice

[12] Quote at Anna Camilla Cordes to Harriet R. Palmer, May 30, 1865; Esther Simon Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, April 5, 1867, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 476 and 545, quote at p. 476; Richard N. Côté, *Mary's World: Love, War, and Family Ties in Nineteenth Century Charleston* (Mt. Pleasant, SC: Corinthian Books, 2001), p. 305.

[13] Mollie Edmonds, *Mississippi Narratives*, Supplement Series 1, vol. 7, pt. 2, p. 672.

[14] Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, August 11, 1870; Esther Simons Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, October 1870, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 662 and 676.

[15] Wilma King, ed., *A Northern Woman in the Plantation South: Letters of Tryphena Blanche Holder Fox, 1856–1876* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), December 30, 1869, pp. 238–39.

[16] Quote at Marianne Palmer Allston to Catherine Palmer Allston, October 4, 1872, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 760.

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fields, seventy cents plus rations for the regular work of cutting, and seventy-five cents plus rations for work in the more difficult acres where the rice was tangled.[17]

At Gowrie, black women could make as much or more in the fields as in domestic work. The system adopted by Heyward also gave "outside hands" (nonresident workers) the option of drawing their rations in cash, which Heyward computed variously at between fifteen and twenty cents per day. The Gowrie system offered the kind of flexibility that reduced reliance on waged domestic work as a source of cash. Black women could draw rations for the days they worked and were permitted to draw on their husbands' accounts as well.[18] Where opportunities were available to earn ready cash, black women were less inclined to take on waged domestic work.

The household economies of black families were projects in the making. Former slave women brought to this task their experience during slavery making and selling products in local markets, growing vegetables on family plots, and working in white women's households. But freedom meant more than just an elaboration of such tasks. It involved as well a reordering of priorities and needs. Black households had no choice but to devote more time and resources to household production of foodstuffs, clothing, furnishings, and so on. This circumstance compelled black women who sought domestic work to seek to do so under conditions that permitted time for gardening, cooking, sewing, and caring for farm animals and fowl.

Whether working part-time as domestic servants or as field hands, or devoting themselves full-time to their own family's crops or animals, the labor of black women and their children made an important contribution to the survival of their households. Children were introduced at an early age to household production, a common pattern among rural working families everywhere. Even a minimum of self-sufficiency required their assistance with such tasks as making butter, milking cows, weeding gardens, and helping to care for sitting hens. When parents removed them from white households, it was a matter of economic survival as well as a means of protecting them from abuse. Former mistresses and masters saw treachery and parental unfitness in these actions. With time, however, the decibel level of the recriminations lowered, even if a

[17] James B. Heyward, Jr., to Louis M. Manigault, September 11, 1876; Heyward to Manigault, September 30, 1876, Louis Manigault Papers, DU. On the competition between South Carolina and Georgia planters along the Combahee River, see Heyward to Manigault, September 30, 1876. (The labor shortage was compounded by a yellow fever epidemic.) In addition to paying some workers by the day, Heyward used a variety of other arrangements. One tied wages to the number of acres cut or tied. Some Combahee planters gave $1.50 per acre for both tasks; Heyward never paid more than ninety cents per acre. Fred Blake, on the other hand, planted his crop with workers who took their wages in land rent. Some positions were scaled according to skill, with engineers making two dollars per day; firemen, seventy-five cents; feeders, sixty-two cents; and mill hands, sixty-six cents, all tasks associated with the threshing stage. Interestingly, the rate for trash hands, usually women, was the same as for firemen (Heyward to Manigault, October 5, 1876; ibid, October 11, 1876, Manigault Papers, DU).

[18] Heyward to Manigault, September 30, 1876; October 11, 1876; May 27, 1877, Manigault Papers, DU.

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certain possessiveness lingered. Henrietta Smith wrote calmly in 1871: "I am about to lose my girl. Her mother wants to take her with her when she moves away. I am on the lookout again."[19]

The reordering of priorities vital to the building of free black homes brought other kinds of adjustments to black and white households.[20] The putting-out of washing has received a great deal of attention from scholars. The putting-out of other household chores shaped the contours of freedom in similar ways. Besides cooking, cleaning, and washing, there were ancillary chores that domestic workers refused to do as add-ons. These included making butter, tending chickens and hens, and making starch. Like washing, these labors migrated to black households. In addition, former mistresses increasingly depended on the household production of black families, and black families, on the cash that could be earned from household production.

The account books of the Cameron family – North Carolina's wealthiest prewar family – detail this interdependency. Over a two-month period, from September 1883 through November 1883, Rebecca Cameron purchased ten and one-half pounds of butter from one freedwoman along with two chickens and four eggs. During the same period, she made additional purchases from the same community of black women: two chickens from Phil Watkins's wife and eighteen eggs from Eveline. Frances, who sold more than nine and a half pounds of butter, vied with Easter and Liddie Vesey in selling the most butter (nearly ten pounds). Four other women – Hannah, Aunt Mary, Francis (Aunt Mary's daughter), and Lucy – sold smaller amounts of butter and eggs, and fewer chickens during this period. Cameron's "Butter Account" shows black women making and selling butter on a regular basis.[21]

This pattern of purchasing and selling between Rebecca Cameron and black women continued into the late 1880s and expanded to include at least six other black women. Many black families put their first earnings from such sales to the purchase of a cow, pig, or fowl, an investment in household production that signaled faith in the returns to be had from sales of butter and eggs, for example.[22] Accounts for three of the black women who sold to the Cameron household, from September to October of 1883, show the sales indicated in Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

[19] Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, August 11, 1870; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Esther Simons Palmer, November 30, 1871, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 662 and 711, quote at p. 711.

[20] See, for example, Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestics in Washington, D.C., 1910–1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994), and Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[21] "Butter Acct. 1883," Cameron Papers, SHC. Cameron paid twelve and a half cents per chicken and fifteen cents per dozen eggs. Some former mistresses also sold goods freedwomen produced within white households.

[22] See A South Carolinian, "South Carolina Society," *The Atlantic Monthly* 39 (June 1877): 678–79. In a famous example, Mary Chesnut and her maid, Molly, made and sold butter "on shares," adapting to household production the terminology of field labor.

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TABLE 6.1. *Easter's Account*

Date	Amount of Butter Sold (in ounces)	Number of Chickens Sold
September 11	12	
September 14	0	1/2
September 15	14	
October 10	12	1/2
October 18	16	
October 25	28	
October 30	24	
November 4	16	
November 8	24	
November 22	12	
November 26	12	

TABLE 6.2. *Francis's Account*

Date	Amount of Butter Sold (in ounces)
September 11	20
September 18	16
September 26	20
October 5	12
October 10	20
October 18	23
October 25	18
November 4	16
November 22	16

TABLE 6.3. *Lydia Vesey's Account*

Date	Amount of Butter Sold (in ounces)
September 18	28
September 26 [25?]	16
October 25	36
October 30	25
November 4	20
November 8	32

Butter and egg accounts formed a central part of the cash flow of black and white household economies. The black women who sold butter and eggs to the Cameron household were former Cameron slaves scattered over the various Cameron plantations. Some continued to work in the fields on an

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irregular basis, at the same time expanding household production destined for the market. Pate Cleamence, for example, worked as a field hand and produced at home for the market.[23]

The vast majority of former slaves failed to achieve the level of subsistence they desired or needed in the years following the Civil War, but its pursuit was not the dead end that some scholars make it out to be. "By 1880," Grace Hale argues, "most ex-slaves and many whites did not have the resources to pursue subsistence and wealthier whites had no need to make what they could more easily and often as cheaply buy. For all classes of southerners, domestic spaces increasingly became places of consumption rather than production."[24] This was probably never the case for rural black people, even after the introduction of mail order catalogs in the late nineteenth century.

Rural black and white workingclass people always depended on the products of their labor, from growing vegetables, keeping fowl and cows, to quilting and making everything from bed linen to clothing. Even if it could not buy a plow, the work and thriftiness of black women helped put meat on the table and purchase other necessities. With the cost of meat around ten cents a pound, the seventy-five cents Willis' wife earned washing clothes for a day was enough to purchase one week's meager supply of meat and avoid a "store bill" with interest.[25] In *The Time of Man*, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, a keen observer of the South's poor, captures how people with "nothing" lived. The fictional Sebe Townley's perspective vividly chronicles the value of women's work.

> In another year he expected to be able to rent a place. He knew a good strip of bottom over beyond the creek and corn land. A body could make the store bill off the ducks and geese alone. It was a prime place for ducks, right on the water before the door. He knew a man used to live there and his wife made the store bill every year off the ducks and chickens. A body could do a sight with ducks, a good thrifty wife could. And look what you could do with chickens.... He knew a man had a wife made enough money to buy a disc plow, just off the egg money alone. And there would still be the geese to pay the store bill.[26]

Former mistresses's reliance on the butter, eggs, meat, and other products produced by poor black and white families increased as the pool of affordable domestic servants available for full-time work decreased. One of the most significant transformations in household production, therefore, was not a transformation of domestic spaces from spaces of production to spaces of consumption but rather the transformation of black and white homes into expanded and

[23] "Butter Acct. 1883," Cameron Papers, SHC. Rebecca Cameron also purchased butter, eggs, and chickens from local white women. Pate Cleamence's name also appears as Pate Clemens.

[24] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), pp. 88–93, quote at p. 89.

[25] "Butter Acct., 1883," Cameron Papers, SHC.

[26] Elizabeth Madox Roberts, *The Time of Man* (1926; reprint, New York: Viking Press, 1963), pp. 50–51.

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different spaces of production and consumption.[27] Contemporary and scholarly preoccupation with the notion of black women's "withdrawal" from the fields has, perhaps, contributed to a certain difficulty in seeing this development.[28]

Small but significant incremental advances in wages for domestic workers buttressed the expansion of the black household as a space of consumption and production. By the 1870s, domestic workers earned wages ranging from two dollars and fifty cents per week, plus food, to five to six dollars per month. Demands for five dollars per month seem to have become fairly common.[29] While it is difficult, given the available records, to establish with any precision the advance or retreat of wages for washerwomen in the postbellum South, it does seem clear that those who worked from their own homes had managed by the 1870s to establish a fairly firm baseline for what constituted a washing task or a day's work.

The evidence also points to continued specialization within the trade. In 1870, Esther Simons Palmer hired a washer to whom she sent only the articles she wanted starched. Palmer had the rest of her washing done by a servant on premises. The way in which Palmer doled out her washing confirms price differentials within the washing trade. Starched clothing involved more labor-intensive work – from making the starch to applying it – than clothing that only needed to be washed and folded. It also routinely required ironing. Clear starch washing was considered a specialty. Starched clothing also burned more easily when ironed, thus requiring even more time and care. Further, clothing and other pieces that were usually starched tended to be the more delicate pieces, which again meant greater care and time in handling, and even more time and care if clear starching was requested. Clear starching required several

[27] By 1880, as Gavin Wright notes, "self-sufficiency in foods was increasingly crowded out." But farm livestock remained an important component of black people's goal of self-sufficiency. In fact, according to W. E. B. Du Bois, it constituted the largest share of black property values in 1880. Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 171; W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro Landholder of Georgia," *Bulletin No. 35*, U.S. Department of Labor (July, 1901): 647–777; Arthur F. Raper, *Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black-Belt Counties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936).

[28] The work of Roger Ransom and Richard Sutch has been of pivotal importance in this debate. See, for example, "The Impact of the Civil War and of Emancipation on Southern Agriculture," *Explorations in Economic History* 12 (January 1975): 13–14 and 22–24. This work is widely cited on the "withdrawal" question. See also Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, p. 162.

[29] C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), May 7, 1865, p. 803; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Esther Simons Palmer, November 30, 1871; Samuella J. Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, May 4, 1872; Thomas Palmer Jerman to John S. Palmer, June 19, 1873, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 711, 729, and 764; Testimony of Rev. E. P. Holmes, November 20, 1883, U.S. Government, *Report of the Committee of the Senate Upon the Relations between Labor and Capital and Testimony Taken by the Committee*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1885), IV: 607; Côté, *Mary's World*, p. 305. Report hereafter cited as *Senate Committee Report*.

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additional steps in the process of making the starch and applying it, and was considered a specialty for which washerwomen charged higher rates. This helps to explain Palmer's decision to separate her laundry. She could not afford to send it all out, so she sent her best pieces to an experienced starcher rather than have them done by the washer she employed on site.[30] Ironing was also treated as a special skill worthy of higher pay. One only has to look at the elaborate construction of elite clothing to see why it was justified.

By the 1880s, rates of pay for domestic labor had reached a plateau for the period of Reconstruction. They remained fairly stagnant at the levels achieved in the 1870s, but did so in the face of continued efforts by black women to push them upward. Janie Watkins Palmer was still paying only five dollars per month for her laundry in 1883 when she received notice that her washer planned "to raise on us."[31] But huge spreads could be found in individual cases. At the lower end, Amy Shaw earned only twenty-five cents for a day's work washing in 1884. At the upper end were women like Charlotte, who, working one Sunday per month, earned $96.00 from May 25, 1881 to May 25, 1882 and a total of $263.00 over the three years from December 25, 1880 to December 25, 1883. It is not clear why Shaw worked on Sundays. Conceivably, she did so in order to reserve the other days in the week for labor in her own home or in the field. The high premium of eight dollars per Sunday that she received also suggests that working in white homes on Sunday was a less common practice. Holidays may also have lent themselves to similar arrangements. This may also account for the twenty-five dollars Shaw received for work on Christmas day.[32]

Not only did wages remain stagnant for most women, but by the 1880s those wages had been further depreciated by a gradual shift of the cost of related expenses from white employers to black employees. That shift doubtless reflected a loss in the bargaining power of black women that coincided with the diminution of federal civil rights protections and assaults on black male suffrage. A decade earlier, it was common for employers to supply soap and other supplies, or for washers to receive additional compensation when they (rather than employers) supplied themselves. Some washerwomen, as noted earlier, also demanded payments sufficient to cover the cost of hauling water for the wash. Elizabeth Porcher paid $1.25 for six dozen pieces in 1865 and bore the cost of the wood, soap, and starch. A week after hiring a washer for her starched clothing, Esther Palmer very reluctantly acquiesced when her

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[30] Esther Simons Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, September 1870; Harriet R. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, October 1870, in *World Turned Upside Down,* ed. Towles, pp. 673 and 675; King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, p. 145; A South Carolinian, "South Carolina Society," p. 679; Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom,* p. 57.

[31] Janie Watkins Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, May 6, 1883, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 922.

[32] Household Account Book of Mrs. Duncan Cameron, pp. 62 and 360, Stagville and Fairntosh, Cameron Papers, SHC. Charlotte received one payment of $50; others were in the amount of $5.

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starcher demanded a raise to fifty cents a day, which the starcher justified on the basis of her having to go half a mile for water.[33]

Increasingly washerwomen made and furnished the soap. This was accompanied by no visible increase in their wages even though it greatly increased their investment of time and labor. Making soap, like making starch, was a time-consuming task that now ate into already meager returns. It meant that black women had to furnish the wood ashes, the hog fat for making the lard (cooked-down hog fat), and the wood for cooking the lard and lye.[34] Making and collecting lye was not only dangerous work but took hours. The lard and lye had to be stirred for several hours until it began to harden. The modest rise in the task rate – the rate per dozen pieces – from about twenty-one to twenty-eight cents per dozen to about thirty-five cents per dozen between 1865 and the 1880s – was insufficient to cover the added costs associated with making and supplying their own soap. Rev. E. P. Holmes, who ministered to hundreds of washerwomen, ironers, cooks, and chamber maids throughout the state of Georgia, estimated that, deducting the cost of supplies, washerwomen working at the rate of thirty-five cents per dozen, realized a profit of only ten cents per dozen.[35]

The efforts of black women to juggle the demands of work, family, and personal freedom took their toll. Most of them did not find better pay or, generally, better on-the-job conditions. They took what joy they could find in the freedom to move about, to live with their families and among friends in their own homes, and to enjoy the small fruits of their labor. The need to supplement wages from field labor that had kept black women in domestic service in the first place – whether on a full- or part-time basis – increased rather than lessened over time. With the spread of sharecropping, fewer planters used a cash wage system, thus increasing the pressure on households to find a means to secure clear cash. Working at home retained the advantage of reducing employers' leverage and power. The freedom to leave abusive employers continued to be cherished despite the sometimes prohibitive cost in loss of income. At the same time, white employers were never completely powerless. Just as black women could leave domestic employment when it suited them, white women in turn could fire them, although not without the typical inconveniences. Gertrude Thomas made firing sound simpler than her own experience proved: "I have the satisfaction of knowing when I am not pleased with a servant that I can look out for another."[36]

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[33] Elizabeth Porcher to Hattie [Harriet R. Palmer], October 1865, Palmer Family Papers; Esther Simons Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, September 1870; Harriet R. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, October 1870, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 673 and 675; King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, July 15, 1865, p. 145.

[34] The production of lye soap exposed washerwomen to dangerous fumes from lye-water, which can burn the eyes and skin and cause respiratory problems.

[35] Holmes Testimony, *Senate Committee Report*, IV: 605 and 607.

[36] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 4, 1871, p. 370.

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I Never Liked Extorted Love or Labor

If former mistresses recoiled at having to perform domestic chores and bargain with black women, both considered beneath their dignity, still more insult and injury appeared when black women became their customers. They bought dresses they were not allowed to wear as slaves, and former mistresses now sold to them, sometimes from dire necessity and sometimes to earn enough to buy themselves a new dress. Perhaps the most embarrassing of all such predicaments was having to buy back a dress one had previously discarded as a gift to a slave. Lizzie Neblett faced that dilemma even before the war had ended. In 1864, she "found herself compelled to buy back a dress she had given a slave years before." She paid $3.50. "In her enthusiasm," writes Drew Faust, "she seemed oblivious both to the irony and to the loss of status implicit in purchasing her own cast-off dress from a slave."[37]

Neither the irony nor the loss of status such exchanges marked was lost on Gertrude Thomas. She was insulted when her former slaves came to her with offers to buy her old dresses and mortified to know that not only could they afford to buy them, but that they were familiar enough with her financial circumstances to know that she needed to sell them. Her embarrassed financial predicament was, indeed, public knowledge, but to have it paraded about by former slaves added to her humiliation. By this point, Thomas owned neither a proper carriage nor a proper horse to draw it. On trips to town, she tried to avoid being seen in the only carriage she now owned, an unfashionable thing, by getting out before it reached Augusta's main street where people could see the face attached to the sheriff's sales. She walked the rest of the way.[38]

For three years, Thomas had been wearing "sack cloth and ashes," while her former slaves had money to buy her old, but best, dresses. She could quip that it was a wasteful expenditure of their money and she could refuse to sell to them. She had "never learned to bargain and trade with our old servants" and had no interest in learning. Yet she could not prevent them from obtaining better dresses from other white women of her class who, under the pressure of poverty, were unwilling to hold tightly to appearance for namesake only. But Thomas was determined that even if other white women gave in, she would not, even though she was in desperate straits.[39]

Thomas tried to salvage some remnant of her former self and power by limiting her transactions with freedwomen in the matter of clothing to the form of gifts. She was open to granting "favors," but requests for them had to be put in language that clearly denoted that she rendered a favor, not a service. When a former slave seeking a dress for her daughter's wedding approached

[37] Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 222.

[38] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 4, 1869, p. 311; March 6, 1870, p. 331; November 29, 1870, pp. 341–42; December 5, 1870, p. 343; January 2, 1871, pp. 357–58; January 8, 1871, pp. 358–59.

[39] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, July 30, 1870, p. 331; November 29, 1870, p. 341; December 14, 1870, p. 351, quotes at pp. 341 and 351, respectively.

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Thomas about purchasing one of hers, she refused. She *gave* her one instead. She would "give" Lily's daughter a wedding dress in memory of old "Aunt Lily" and her family's former "faithful" service as slaves. To sell that dress to Lily was too hardy an acknowledgment of their new relations and too hardy an acknowledgement of black women's right to "take up" their money to dress themselves.[40]

Thomas explained and defended her position on paternalistic and altruistic grounds. The fact that Lily's mother had been her mother's first cook when she married satisfied Thomas that paternalism was the proper response to Lily's request. Moreover, she reasoned, the fact that Lily's house had recently burned down made a handout all the more appropriate, Lily, herself, had not raised either of these matters. Nor had she requested a handout. She had, after all, asked to buy the dress.[41] Like many former mistresses, Thomas revolted really at anything that had to do with black women dressing up and otherwise embellishing their physical appearance unless it was done with her approval and through her giving. When another former slave offered to pay her to cut out a dress, Thomas knew that she could not. To avoid the distasteful dilemma, she quoted a price she knew was out of the woman's reach, and as added insurance, said that she did not have time for such a project. She would not be treated as if she were no more than another hired hand. She would not endorse independent decisions on the part of black women about "articles of dress." Had the woman made the request in the form of a favor and not as a commercial transaction, she would likely have obliged her, she wrote.[42]

Cornelia Shelman, the woman who sought to hire Thomas as a seamstress, was hardly blind to the dilemma her request created for Thomas. In fact, she may have deliberately provoked it. Shelman, after all, had other options. Her mother was a talented seamstress whom Thomas herself employed. And, there were other black women in the community who were capable seamstresses. But Shelman took the job to Thomas anyway. Possibly she wanted to see Thomas squirm, to make her uncomfortable, to confront her. Possibly, she sought revenge for Thomas's past treatment of her when she worked as Thomas' cook. Thomas had fired her only a few months before. Now Shelman, who Thomas had earlier described as dressed in rags, had returned to employ her former mistress.[43] Thomas's refusal did not diffuse the blow she suffered. Not only were ladies' maids dressing up in their former mistresses's gowns before their faces, as many white women complained, they were asking their former mistresses to make them new gowns.

At the same time, Thomas and other employers continued to try to squeeze a bargain by hiring one person to perform tasks previously done by several slaves, or by adding on work. Black women continued to rebuff such propositions.

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[40] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, December 14, 1870, p. 351.
[41] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, December 14, 1870, p. 351.
[42] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, December 14, 1870, p. 351.
[43] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 14, 1869, pp. 315–16; December 14, 1870, p. 351.

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Cooks refused to make late suppers for unexpected guests or for the husbands of employers returning home late, or to take on the job of babysitting. When she wanted a servant to perform a task unrelated to the job description for which the person was hired, Gertrude Thomas came to know instinctively that she would have to offer additional compensation in one form or another. When her plans to attend a club party were foiled because the cook and house girl had a social engagement of their own, the wedding of a friend, she was irritated but no longer enraged.[44] Six years of negotiating the terrain of freedom had made her a more perceptive student of free labor, though she still found it hard to reconcile the reality of who she now was with what she had been raised to be, "a golden child and a golden woman," as Nell Painter poignantly put it.[45] She clung stubbornly to a prewar identity that emancipation had eroded. "I never liked extorted love or labour," she wrote. "What I wish now is a sober respectable white woman or colored who will find it in her interest to take an interest in pleasing me and interesting herself in my children."[46] Thomas's desire testified to the forced intimacies of slavery.

By 1880, Thomas had almost reached bottom. Her floors were bare and broken plastering littered her home. But she had something more important, a cook. In this woman, named Dinah Hunter, Thomas thought she had found someone interested in "pleasing" her at last. In Hunter, she invested her sense of who she was. "I believe she likes me," she wrote, "and she mingles with her service so much interest in my welfare that it touches me." Though threatened with another sheriff's sale, the potential loss of a lifetime interest in trust properties inherited from her father's estate, and, besides, forced to use her earnings from teaching to pay the bills her husband could not, she still could not imagine living without a cook; this was more important than repairing her walls.[47] Managing to keep a cook proved another matter. Within months, "Dinah" the "treasure," was "annoying" and "disrespectful." Soon she was gone, only to be replaced by another and another who showed no interest in "pleasing" Thomas.[48]

Thomas ended the decade of the 1880s living as makeshift a life as she had in 1865. She had one house servant, a cook she described as "disrespectful and noisy" but the best she could "command the services of." She hired a washer who did the work off-site. She rented out rooms to pay for dresses and bonnets. She employed black women to sell her old dresses and hats for her. She and a daughter did much of their own housework. Merchants dunned her at home for embarrassingly tiny sums. One was demanding $1.50 for a pair of shoes she had purchased for her daughter and another, thirty-five cents

[44] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 4, 1871, p. 369.
[45] Painter, "Introduction," in Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, p. 67.
[46] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 4, 1871, p. 370.
[47] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, December 31, 1879, p. 391; February 3, 1880, p. 396; May 19, 1880, p. 403.
[48] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, October 1, 1880, p. 412; January 5, 1881, p. 417; October 10, 1882, p. 430.

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for a vest. She sent her cook to the market to buy ten cents worth of beef steak. Like their father, three of her children saw no reason to unite with the church.[49] Still, despite her husband's ruinous financial management and her own extravagances, Thomas was able to delay entering the labor force longer than many of her peers; she eventually taught school. She could not put off making other accommodations. Poverty eventually forced her to put aside her pride and bargain and trade with black women.[50]

The realities of life vanquished Thomas's sense of paternalism, *noblesse oblige,* and class and race privilege day by day. Her confident assertion of ten years earlier that she would give but not sell her dresses to black women, gave way under the crush of poverty. By the 1870s, she was selling her old dresses to black women in part to pay the wages of her seamstress, and in part to keep up with her magazine subscriptions. She stopped trying to view those transactions with black women as anything but "selling." Her sons, Jeff and Turner, though destined before the war to stand in the footsteps of their ancestors among the ranks of the South's leading white men, now found themselves without position, power, or wealth. Since at least 1869, Turner had worked as a field hand, plowing alongside the slaves he once expected to inherit. In 1880, Jeff was employed by a Chinese merchant. Thomas considered both situations "degrading."[51]

The financial loss slaves' emancipation had entailed, combined with the resistance of former slaves to the reinstatement of prewar customary norms of subservience, forced radical pecuniary and social changes in the households of all former mistresses. Before the war, Mary Pringle had fourteen slaves in her household and an additional six about her yard and, thus, at her disposal. After her slaves became free people and the war wiped out other forms of her family's wealth, Pringle held her family together financially for a time by renting out the first floor of her home. "By great management," she wrote in the spring of 1867, "I counted up my outside rents at $600, including the housekeeper's room and library." She rented the housekeeper's room to a white couple, enduring a double humiliation: having to rent out her rooms and having to rent them to workingclass white people. The wife in that tenant family was herself a domestic servant and the husband, a policeman. Pringle shortly put them out on the excuse that the woman was a heavy drinker. On top of this she faced her husband's criticism for letting the basement out to "stragglers."[52]

[49] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, March 25, 1880, p. 400; January 5, 1881, p. 417; April 3, 1888, pp. 444–45; September 20, 1884, p. 436.

[50] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, September 2, 1880, pp. 408–9; January 8, 1881, pp. 420–21.

[51] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, February 13, 1871, p. 361; March 25, 1880, p. 400; May 4, 1869, p. 311; September 24, 1880, p. 409; September 27, 1882, p. 428. In 1880, Turner Thomas secured employment as a clerk but continued to work on the farm. Jeff left Chong's in 1883, "a situation" which he, like his mother, found "degrading" and took a job as a railroad express messenger. See also *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 639–40.

[52] Côté, *Mary's World*, p. 270.

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The following year, Pringle rented out her coach house. The income was an absolute necessity, but her pride was stung. "I am a walking advertisement," she wrote her daughter, "humbly whispering to my friends that my apartments are vacant." She let the coach room for four dollars per month to "the Jew Lewis," who turned it into a store. Pringle and her family quickly regretted the decision, thinking they could have gotten more than double that amount from another Jewish applicant who came forward after the lease had been offered to Lewis.[53] In addition, the store in her yard was further advertisement of her poverty. To help feed her family and pay taxes, Pringle also made orange marmalade, sending some of it to New Haven, where her daughter, Mary Francis, sold it for her. At the same time another daughter, Susan, made floral arrangements, which she sold at the Charleston Hotel, mainly to northerners.[54]

For the first time in their lives, elite women came to understand prudent economy as a way of life, even those like Gertrude Thomas and Mary Pringle, who initially resisted it and held out for as long as they could. It was no longer possible to view pinching pennies as a nice ideal as many had before the war, or to view doing without a new dress or servants on command as a temporary aberration. It was not until 1871 that Mary Pringle gave up the ghost. From her prewar staff of twenty slaves, only three remained in the spring of that year: Amelia (the cook), Thomas (the waiter), and Cretia (the general housekeeper). In July, Pringle decided to fire Thomas. "I give him up," she wrote "as a matter of principle, for people in charity should not keep three servants." People in charity, she apparently imagined, still might keep two. Not of her own volition, she was soon thereafter reduced to one when Cretia left and moved in with her son.[55]

As they struggled to retain at least one servant and, simultaneously, to juggle household finances, former mistresses and those daughters of the old planter class who came of age after the war, learned the necessity of maintaining household accounts. Before the war, the keeping of household accounts was touted as a sign of an accomplished mistress, but then, it was an ideal that most mistresses could comfortably ignore. Now, they could not. Some women, like Grace Elmore, resented the new responsibility and its suggestion of fiscal constraints. "'Tis disgusting," she wrote of her new situation, "to be obliged to calculate so closely."[56] Still, the meticulous account books kept by Margaret B. Mordecai exhibit the new importance white women were forced to attach to domestic economy. Mordecai detailed her expenses for everything, from the purchase of tea and a coffee pot, to fruit, dishes, cheese, medicine, and wages for her washerwoman. So did Mrs. Duncan Cameron in her detailed "Butter

[53] Côté, *Mary's World*, pp. 270–71. See also Henry James Trentham, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 15, pt. 2, p. 365.

[54] Côté, *Mary's World*, pp. 270–72.

[55] Côté, *Mary's World*, pp. 283–84, quote at p. 284.

[56] Grace Elmore Diary, March 12, 1865, SHC.

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Account" and "Washing Account," along with an account of all of her store purchases. In 1882, she recorded her servants' wages and $638.95 in store purchases.[57]

The transition from mistress to employer and worker was wrenching, and the public humiliation, seemingly unending. One source of humiliation was the transformation of mistresses into keepers of plantation stores, an ironic turn from keepers of the keys to the plantation store rooms. Elizabeth Porcher, for example, set herself up as a merchant on her family's plantation, selling and trading with black people a variety of goods from fish to tobacco.[58] The store allowed her to take advantage of the growing opportunities for trade with former slaves. Gertrude Thomas painfully noted her transition from "fashionable lady" to "business woman," and Tryphena Fox, her new role as a "market woman." Performance of this new role fueled other kinds of transformations that brought sweeping changes not only to household economies and but also to relationships between black and white women.[59]

Among the most significant of these transformations was the organization of white women's cooperatives "to assist Ladies who are struggling by their own endeavors to support themselves and families." This is how a handbill circulated by the Ladies Mutual Aid Society of Charleston announced its founding, in 1866. Led by Mrs. George A. Trenholm, wife of the former Confederate Secretary of the Treasury, and boasting a list of officers and a "Board of Managers" representing many of the wealthiest prewar planter families, the organization was established to support its members by taking in orders for such things as needle work, jellies, cordials, wines, and pickles.[60] Women's mutual aid societies were not uncommon in the nineteenth century, but the announced purpose of the Charleston group signaled something dramatically new and different, indeed, a seismic shift in gender and race relations.

In calling on the public to purchase its needle work and preserves, Charleston's elite white women would not necessarily have raised any eyebrows. This, after all, was women's work; and, during the war, both the proliferation of ladies' societies and women's participation as nurses and treasury

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57 Account Book of Mrs. M. B. Mordecai, Cameron Papers; "Butter Acct. 1883," Cameron Papers; Household Account of Mrs. Duncan Cameron, Stagville and Faintosh, Cameron Papers, SHC. See also Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, December 9, 1878, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 814.

58 Elizabeth P. Porcher to Harriet R. Palmer, March 1866, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 498. For examples of the rare cases where antebellum mistresses kept account books, see Joan E. Cashin, *Our Common Affairs: Texts from Women in the Old South* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 145–46, and Nancy D. Bercaw, *Gendered Freedoms: Race, Rights, and the Politics of Household in the Delta, 1861–1875* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), p. 51.

59 Harriet R. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, January 1869; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, February 9, 1869 in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 610 and 611; Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, January 2, 1871, p. 357; King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, February 10, [1870], p. 244.

60 Ladies Mutual Aid Association (Charleston, S.C.), Handbill, ca. 1866 (43/0996), SCHS.

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girls, had introduced the idea of white women's public work to a wide audience. But there, similarities to the past ended. If elite white women were not doing charity work for the first time, it was the first time that they had publicly begged it for themselves. While not strangers to creating fancy needle work and making tasty preserves, elite women had never before had to peddle them. During slavery, they had presided over the production of jams, and their grammatical construction of this work, "made jam today," had erased the labor of bondswomen on whom the actual making had devolved. Now they did all of these, making jellies and needlework by their own hands, and advertising them for sale "to support themselves and families."

The Baltimore Society had its origins in the same financial and social distress. Established as a cooperative to minister to the needs of white women, the organization, headed by Isabella Yates Snowden, operated as a combination workshop and store. Members took their old clothes there to sell along with goods they produced in their homes. The society also operated as a contractor, taking orders for sewing that it subcontracted out to its members. Sometimes it placed large orders and sold the finished products in its store.

Planter women hoping to earn a spot of cash sent cordials and old dresses and shirts to sell. They accepted orders for sewing. A bottle of ketchup sold for fifty cents; a chemise, for eighty cents. Charlestonian Alice Gaillard Palmer, a war widow living with her parents on the reduced income of Wee Nee, the plantation inherited from her husband's estate, noted in August 1869 that she had just completed making aprons for the society and was set to begin work on an order of baby dresses and two gowns for a bridal trousseau. She expected to earn three dollars for each of the gowns. In addition, she taught school.[61]

The organization of the Ladies Mutual Aid Society and the Baltimore Society are small but telling pieces of the larger story of the transformation of southern women's lives in the aftermath of Confederate defeat and slaves' emancipation, and, through these transformations the fundamental rearrangement of southern race and gender relations. The formation of these groups amounted to a startling admission of the failure of southern paternalism and the reality of black freedom. The recognition (however discreet) these groups accorded to women's self-reliance as a value reflected, no doubt, the impact the war had on notions of southern patriarchy. The recognition also doubtless reflected the impact black women had – by turns by their presence and their departures – on the transformation of plantation households and white women's lives. In the aftermath of the war, Charleston's elite white women, like others of their race and class throughout the South, may well have come to

[61] On the Baltimore Society, see Elizabeth P. Porcher to Harriet R. Palmer, August 5, 1866, p. 528; Harriet Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, August 4, 1867, pp. 560–61; Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, September, 25, 1867, p. 565; Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, August 3, 1869, p. 632; Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, July 17, 1870, p. 654; Esther Simons Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, September 1870, p. 672; Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, April 5, 1871, p. 684; William C. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, March 25, 1882, p. 911, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles.

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understand what Hanna Fambro meant when she predicted at the outset of the Civil War that the war "was goin' to set us free."[62] It is possible to imagine that she had in mind mistresses she knew as well as enslaved women like herself.

Before the Civil War planter women could not have imagined that they or their daughters would one day work for a living making or selling foodstuffs and clothing; that they would weave to pay for their portraits, or work for years as clerks. Those fortunate enough to secure wartime positions had seen them as a temporary sacrifice, not as an entrée into a future occupation. As Judith McGuire explained when she sought a clerk's position in 1864: "They require us to say that we are really in want of the office – rather a work of supererogation, I should say, as no lady would bind herself to keep accounts for six hours per day without a dire necessity."[63] Teaching had never been a strictly forbidden occupation for southern white women, but to be employed as a teacher without raising an eyebrow generally required that one be a spinster or widow. The substantial antebellum market for northern female tutors testified to the constraints on market opportunities for educated elite southern white women. In the postbellum South, poverty and need overrode these constraints. Elite women of the antebellum planter class taught school and worked in other capacities. This necessity, however, made them clamor all the more for black domestic help.

Having to work, white women learned – as black women already knew – left little time or energy for anything else. Isabelle Ward found working incompatible even with writing letters, not a very taxing endeavor, because "we have no servant, & as we teach regularly we have had our hands full in every way."[64] Ward was not only teaching but teaching black children, a job that would have been inconceivable in the prewar South. Janie Watkins Palmer supported herself in part by taking in washing and sewing. Palmer limited the washing she did for wages to the laundry of other white women but made dresses for black women for a fee. On one occasion she wrote:

I made such a pretty dress for a negro this week – a dark blue bunting with a sky blue silk with raised flowers on it. I took it with fear and trembling but as the girl said she thought she wanted something like mine that Lizzie [Anne Elizabeth] Cordes helped me with I thought it was too good a chance to get $1.50 so I tried my best. I did it in less than three days, and it really looked very well made and very pretty. This with my work from the Cordeses brought me $2 this week. If only I could get that much a little oftener it would help us a heap, and I told you it is a tight push to get on after we take out $12 for rent, $5 for washing, $2 to Elsie, and $2 for fuel there is very little left each month to live on. I heard our washer say she means to raise on us, but she won't get

[62] Fambro, *Ohio Narratives*, Supplement Series 1, vol. 5, p. 341.

[63] Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, July 20, 1865, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 480; Judith W. McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War by a Lady of Virginia*, ed. Jean Berlin (1867; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), November 11, 1864, p. 244. See also King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, February 10 [1870], p. 244.

[64] Isabelle H. Ward to [Louis] Manigault, January 26, 1869, Manigault Papers, DU.

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any more for we have not got it to give, as it is frequently we have to do without any kind of meat for dinner and never have it for breakfast.[65]

Unlike Gertrude Thomas, Palmer was unapologetic and betrayed no great embarrassment about sewing for pay for black women. She made nothing of the fact that a former slave would desire a dress like one she owned, much less that she should be asked to make it. Still, she had no intention of giving up her own servant or washer, even though the wages saved would have helped to put meat on her table and eliminated her need to work for black women. Yet, she apparently missed the irony of going to the wash tub herself to earn the money to pay a black woman to wash and clean for her.

White women in the Palmer family slowly conceded the necessity of earning a living even if they fought the necessity of doing without servants. They worked to keep from doing without black help, no matter how minimal that help. They devised creative solutions to their money shortages, but largely to keep themselves in fashion and in servants. They took advantage of the vibrant market in old clothes, selling last year's dresses to black women in order to buy themselves new ones and to have the cash to hire black domestic help. But the women who had once belonged to them could be discriminating customers, as Sarah Palmer Williams learned when she tried to sell an old dress for ten dollars. Her sister-in law, Alice Gaillard Palmer, wisely advised her to lower the price. The trimming and skirt on the dress were "both old fashioned" and would be rejected by the "fastidious ladies of color," especially when they could buy "new marino fabric for one dollar per yard." Sarah's old dress, Palmer warned, stood "little chance of selling for anything" at all.[66]

In addition to their dealings with the Baltimore Society, the Palmer women entered independently into partnerships with black women who sold their former mistresses's old dresses on commission, making ten cents from each sale. Neither were the Palmer women averse to shopping for their domestic servants. On trips to Charleston, Harriet Palmer purchased dresses and other items on behalf of black women, seemingly on a fairly regular basis.[67] On February 9, 1869, she received five dollars from a freedwoman for the purchase of a new dress. Five dollars was a significant sum, and the elderly woman requested that

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[65] William C. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, March 25, 1883, p. 911; Janie Watkins Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, May 6, 1883, p. 922, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles. Conceivably, the washing Janie Palmer took in from the Baltimore Society was done by the black woman she hired to do her own washing. Like other white women, she also had problems retaining her employees. A few months after she wrote her cousin Harriet Palmer of her difficulties, Elsie, the servant she was paying two dollars a month, left (Harriet P. Williams to Harriet R. Palmer, July 28, 1883, p. 929).

[66] Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, January 8, 1868; see also Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, January 9, 1868, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 579 and 580, quote at p. 579.

[67] Burr, ed., *Secret Eye,* March 25, 1880, p. 400; Harriet R. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, January 1869; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, February 9, 1869; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Esther Simons Palmer, April 1871, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 607, 610, and 690.

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Harriet Palmer use it wisely. She wanted a dress similar to one she had seen but "not as expensive" and requested that any remaining funds be returned to her.[68]

During slavery, black women had used money earned from market sales to buy little extras. Hanna Plummer's mother made bed clothes, bonnets, and dresses to earn cash. Fannie Moore's mother, a field hand, quilted and spun thread at night after working in the fields during the day in order to be able to purchase items her owners did not supply. Betty Deese's master allowed her to raise hogs and chickens. Women used money their husbands earned as well. With freedom, the number of women able to buy fabrics they had not been allowed to wear as slaves dramatically increased. And they could design garments according to their own tastes.[69]

Whether the priority was gaining autonomy in work, maximizing income, caring for children, splurging on extras, and so on down a very long list, in the end, the priorities black women set for themselves and their families and households shaped in fundamental ways the transition to freedom in planter households. Henrietta Palmer Smith was merely blowing at the wind when she bragged, after losing a washer who quit near the end of her pregnancy, that as soon as her husband received a raise she would put her starch clothes out and "make the cook put the house to rights and wait on the table." Rather than improving, her husband's finances steadily worsened over the next decade, and with them the possibility that she would be able to escape cooking her own meals.[70] So, too, her dream that she would be able to make her cook take on additional work cleaning her house and waiting on her table for no extra pay. With a steadily dwindling staff of domestic workers, the Palmer women hired a servant to carry the water and take out the slop, but swept their own rooms and made their own beds. When a servant could not come because of illness or sickness in her own family, they did their own ironing, cooking, and washing. No longer forced to work up to the moment they gave birth, black women also left domestic jobs weeks before they were due.[71]

All across the South, former mistresses, like black women, scraped to make ends meet. But even so, they went on fighting recognition that slavery was over,

[68] Harriet R. Palmer to Esther Simons Palmer, January 1869; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, February 9, 1869, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 610 and 611. See also Chapter 4.

[69] Hannah Plummer, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 15, pt. 2, p. 179; Fannie Moore, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 15, pt. 2, p. 129; Betty Deese Deposition, May 26, 1874 before T. W. Parrish, Special Commissioner, ser. 1, S.C., Box 4 [I-81].

[70] Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, August 11, 1871; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, February 1883, in W*orld Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 698–99 and 902. Over time, "day work" came to mean the performance of several different tasks by one woman rather the division of domestic work into discrete tasks – washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning – performed by different workers.

[71] Esther Simons Palmer to Elizabeth Palmer Porcher, June 7, 1869; Sarah Palmer Williams to Harriet R. Palmer, May 18, 1871; Henrietta Palmer Smith to Harriet R. Palmer, August 11, 1871, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 625, 691, and 699.

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and they remained rebels. Alice Gaillard Palmer had never retreated from this position. The death of her husband during the war, shortly after their marriage, seemed to give renewed vigor to her faith in the Confederacy, slavery, and black people's inferiority. In the spring of 1865, with the defeat of the South looming, she remained defiant, even arguing that the Palmers should refuse to recognize the power of the North to arbitrate contracts with freedpeople and calling the loyalty oath treason to the South. It would be "humiliating" to the Palmer name, she wrote. Indeed, it would "kill the Palmer name." But by August of 1865, even she stood prepared to take the loyalty oath, though she "hated the idea," in order to protect her property. "I am a greater Rebel than ever," she wrote more than a decade later. A rebel she might still be, but a much different kind of rebel than she was in 1861. And, by 1876, she too was earning a living teaching, a job she found so "irksome" and wrong that she hoped the school would accomplish so little it would be forced to close.[72] This, despite her heavy reliance on the income she received from teaching black children.

Alice Palmer can be counted among those former mistresses who thought that somehow the old and the new might cohabit. Mary Pringle certainly thought that when her servant Cretia left. "It was a great shock to me," Pringle wrote, "for Cretia is the comfort – animal comfort – of my every day life. None of these demoralized negroes would make up my chamber fire at daylight in the morning (Cretia does it, indeed, before day light) or give me as much cold water as I like to bathe in all the year round. I was much startled at her communication, yet endeavored not to show it."[73] Even as they found themselves doing work once unimaginable to them, some mistresses remained unreconstructed in their habits of thought.

The changes elite white women were forced to make in their lives were nonetheless revolutionary. They might criticize black women for taking on "white airs," but it was they who had sold black women last year's dresses, to buy bread or the current year's fashions for themselves.[74] And for some, John S. Palmer's comments were prescient. Palmer placed his hopes on the younger generation, believing they would more easily adapt to postwar changes. Ann P. Porcher was among this group. While her mother and aunts were still fighting to hold on to a servant or two in the 1880s, she, John Palmer's granddaughter, took a job in New York City. As an assistant librarian at the Cooper Institute, she earned her own bread at the rate of sixteen cents an hour.[75]

[72] Journal of Harriet R. Palmer, March 12, 1865, Palmer Papers, SCL; Alice Gaillard Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, August 2, 1865; Alice A. Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, July 9, 1876, November 8, 1881, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 440, 482, 792, and 871, quotes at 440, 482 and 792.

[73] Côté, *Mary's World*, p. 284. Pringle's expression of surprise rings false in light of the fact that she had already concluded that "dear, good Cretia" was "a downright Radical" (p. 281).

[74] See, for example, Elizabeth Palmer Porcher to Harriet R. Palmer, September 30, 1882, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed., Towles, p. 883.

[75] Elizabeth Palmer Porcher to Harriet R. Palmer, March 4, 1883, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 904; Rable, *Civil Wars*, pp. 265–88.

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The transformation of the domestic center of the plantation household was the achievement of freed men and women who challenged the definition of freedom proffered by former masters, mistresses, officers of the Union army and of the Freedmen's Bureau, and northern missionaries. Freedwomen's struggles as domestic workers were part and parcel of the larger struggle of emancipation. When fewer black women opted for domestic service, that choice often reflected the need their families had to put all possible hands "behind the mule," and on family plots. Meanwhile, those who worked in domestic service stood ready to leave when needed in the fields or when working conditions in white homes became intolerable. As Sarah Palmer Williams concluded, "they have all changed."[76] In changing, freedwomen ensured that white women changed, too.

Not surprisingly, former slaves fashioned an understanding of freedom that required the dismantling of antebellum notions of southern white womanhood. The push toward that dismantling could take many forms, from leaving and fighting and even to sassing. When a black woman declared, to her female employer's face that "she cared no more for white folks than she did black ones" and "would take one to the court house just as soon as she would the other," she proclaimed the new order as loudly as if she had demanded better compensation. What she proclaimed aloud also had profound significance. The white woman (Gertrude Thomas) had attempted to intervene in a quarrel between two freedwomen, her employee being the one who spoke up. None of the three could have overlooked that the words announced the readjustment of gender and class relations that was underway in the South. In claiming her right to take white (or black) people to court, the freedwoman challenged Gertrude Thomas's place in southern society and proclaimed her own rights as a citizen. Thomas had no satisfactory recourse. Her options, her husband informed her, were to "dismiss them or shoot them."[77] This was four years after the end of the war.

Contests over the renegotiation of the terms of household labor, and race and class relations, continued into the 1870s. By then, however, white female employers were more likely to opt for some kind of compromise, although even these proved unsatisfactory at best. Black women might show up for work but invoke all manner of precepts about how that work would be accomplished, as Esther Simons Palmer learned one Sunday in the summer of 1870 when she ordered her servant Ellen to kill a chicken and make chicken soup. Ellen

[76] Sarah Palmer Williams to Harriet R. Palmer, January 12, 1884, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 938; G. P. Collins to Paul C. Cameron, March 11, 1866, Cameron Papers, DU. Crops raised "behind the mule" were generally those subject to division with the landowner. Crops for which the landlord did not furnish seed or fertilizer, such as sugar cane, watermelon, and sweet potatoes, were generally not divided. On this point, see Thomas J. Edwards, "The Tenant System and Some Changes Since Emancipation," in J. P. Lichtenberger, ed., *The Negro's Progress in Fifty Years: The Annals,* Vol. 69 (Philadelphia, PA: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1913), p. 41.

[77] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, June 1, 1869, p. 316.

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made the soup and served it, but there was not a bit of chicken in it. Palmer dismissed as preposterous Ellen's explanation that "she would not kill chickens on Sunday" and threatened to fire her. Ellen stood her ground. In the end, Palmer's son killed the chicken and Ellen cooked it. The Palmers probably took some small satisfaction in the fact that Ellen had at least cooked the chicken; Ellen, no doubt, reveled in the fact that she had not violated precepts of her own, which forbade killing chickens on the Sabbath.[78]

Tryphena Fox pronounced Milly her most reliable servant – the three years Milly worked for Fox set a record for the length of time Fox had been able to keep a servant. This favorite refused, however, to do the washing. To keep her, Fox agreed to "hire the washing extra." But then Milly inherited two lots and a furnished house in the nearby town of Algiers, Louisiana, from her godmother. This dramatic improvement in her personal fortune gave Milly the resources to reevaluate and change her relationship with Fox. First, she took a personal leave of a little more than a week. When she returned, Fox took comfort in her "broad & smiling face," thinking it meant that Milly was "delighted" to be back. Instead, she let Fox know that she would be taking an additional three weeks off. Having placed her faith in messages Milly had relayed to her, indicating her intention to return, Fox "was *surprised* & very much *displeased* for I have kept her place for her & worked like a darky rather than hire a fresh hand & *teach* them."[79]

Milly's newfound economic independence threatened Fox's sense of identity as much as it interfered with her housework. Indeed, Fox believed Milly acted deliberately to taunt and provoke her, for when she returned, instead of reporting to Fox, she went to the nearby black quarters. "She is too independent," Fox declared, "thinks I cannot get along without her & so stops up there in the Quarters till the 1st of November, knowing I have no one upon whom I can rely to cook my next meal – *working* myself & waiting for her."[80] The woman she had waited for, Fox finally concluded, was like the rest of her race, "*treacherous, difficult & unreliable*." Worse, her financial independence made her "of no account as a servant anymore."[81]

A year later, Fox was still trying an old shoe, this time thinking to resolve her domestic dilemmas by hiring a black couple and their daughter, all for $300.00 for the year, which averages around one dollar and fifty cents per week, per worker. Letters to her mother in Massachusetts painted a picture

[78] Esther Simons Palmer to Harriet R. Palmer, July 1870, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 633. Another of the Palmers's former slaves, Abraham, refused to work on January 5, the day he believed was the true date of Christ's birth. (See Journal of Harriet Palmer, January 2, 1866.)

[79] King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, October 9, [1868], pp. 227–28, quote at p. 227.

[80] King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, October 9, [1868], p. 227.

[81] King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, October 9, [1868], p. 228. See also King, "Introduction," in *A Northern Woman*, and King, "The Mistress and Her Maids: White and Black Women in a Louisiana Household, 1858–1868," in *Discovering the Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past*, ed. Patricia Morton (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 82–106.

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of domestic bliss. Celestine would do the cooking, washing, and ironing while her thirteen-year-old daughter, Rosella, would clean the rooms and serve as the nurse for Fox's young son. Fox was initially happy. Not only did Celestine do her work well but voluntarily pitched in to help her husband, Victor, who was placed in charge of the garden. Fox congratulated herself on having found a black woman who was different from others of her race who "want to do certain things for certain wages & no more," applauding this generous trait.[82] No doubt, the fact that Fox had greatly relaxed her standards of acceptable behavior contributed to the new servant's ability to please her, but, as always, Fox's self-congratulation was premature.

Having braved a litany of her daughter's complaints about the trials of domesticity and black women for more than a decade, Fox's mother made the daring suggestion that her daughter consider doing her own work. Fox retorted that her mother clearly did not understand the work of "such an establishment" as hers; it required help. At the same time, it was clear that her power to order her household as she chose and to order her servants about was no longer effective with Celestine and her family. The new situation that she had bragged was so perfect turned out to be, on closer inspection, as problematic as past experiences with black women. Celestine did indeed volunteer to help in the garden, but habitually served breakfast an hour late. Victor, Celestine's husband, knew Fox liked to have the cows milked at five thirty in order to have fresh milk to serve for her children's supper, but could not seem to get the job done before six thirty or seven o'clock, often after the children were in bed. But Fox stopped fussing about these matters or the other "many curious freaks." She counted herself lucky that she had help at all until the day Celestine "*left suddenly* taking Rosella with her, without any *provocation from* me or *notification* to me." "My baby," she reported to her mother, "lacked a day of being a month old."[83]

Fox's account of her travails as a mistress-turned-employer is tiresome to read, and yet valuable for its insight into the psychology of power.[84] The most salient feature of that psychology, in her case, was blindness to the motives of those she related to as servants. Remarkably, after all that had happened, she still worked to construct a narrative of the good mistress. "I have never had much trouble with any of our servants since I came from the Confederacy," she lied in 1870. Yet, remarkably, true predicaments and genuine fears are revealed

82 King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, February 13, 1869, pp. 229–32, quote at p. 232.

83 King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, pp. 234–36, 238, and 241–44, quotes at pp. 236, 234, 235, and 238, respectively.

84 As Nell Painter and Deborah Gray White argue, the question of the psychology of power in southern race and class relations is a vastly understudied subject. A good starting point would be Frantz Fanon's study of mental disorders associated with the Algerian War. See Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 249–310. See especially Case No. 5, 267–70. Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in Nell Irvin Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1999), pp. 9–10.

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in the very same letter. The household was in much better shape, she wrote, now that she had employed a white English couple. Because they were white people, she could trust them. She could trust the woman with the keys to her store room and with her baby. "I feel so much easier when this woman has the baby than I would trust her to a darky & perhaps a careless one at that." The arrangement, like other such efforts by white women employers to attempt to get from poor white women what they could not get from black women, was short-lived. Fox hired the couple for twelve dollars a month, which she thought was sufficient to pay them for cooking, cleaning, gardening, and child care. In less than a month, Fox fired them for drinking on the job.[85]

Susan Magill's experience was similar. After paying "a white girl $9 a month to cook and do housework.... Mrs. M did nearly everything herself and yet as soon as the month was over the girl left her." Magill had apparently had no better luck with black women. "She can't keep a servant over a month and not that long sometimes," an acquaintance wrote. Fox, too, was also again dependent on the labor of black females, "two helps," two teenage black girls, "both *very* slovenly & careless & prone to be idle & yet very good girls for blacks." Her aim was unchanged: to teach them to be "good" house servants. This time, she thought she stood a better chance because they were young, "*much better* than some old, hard-headed, impudent, stealing woman."[86]

To the end, Delphine Taveau remained unapologetically unreconstructed. When her family in New York and Boston once again balked at supporting her family while her husband seemed forever unemployed and in debt, Taveau continued to plead for support. In fact, she was the victim, she told her brother, and "*thoroughly disgusted* with life of such hardship to which you know I was not brought up to." Her current life was "a very different thing from the agreeable life of *planting* at the South, for to play cook washer & chamber maid all at the same time & that in self-defense, for even if you have money, you can't hire the servants."[87]

Servants were, of course, available for hire, just not on the terms white women believed they deserved. Bella apparently made this clear to a potential employer who found that calling up old relations of power gave her no advantage:

> I have not written to Bella to engage her positively yet, but wrote to ask her if she will come to oblige me. She wrote today and would come to oblige me but wants to know what I would give her. I wrote for answer that I had always been in the habit of paying $7 but that she must fix her own price so she wrote today that she would not come for any less than what Miss Lulie had paid her. I will write her again in the afternoon.[88]

[85] King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, February 10, [1870], pp. 242–44 and 246, quote at p. 243.

[86] Sarah Palmer Williams to Harriet R. Palmer, September 19, 1883, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 931; King, ed., *A Northern Woman*, July 10, 1870, p. 247.

[87] Delphine Taveau to Richard T. Sprague, June 29, 1872, Taveau Papers, DU.

[88] Henrietta A. [Palmer] Smith to Harriett R. Palmer, October 1883, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 934. Smith was apparently optimistic that an accord could be reached for in the same letter she asked her sister to loan her "servant pillows."

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Assessing the situation from the vantage point of 1877, an ex-master noted that "many ladies, among the aristocrats and the respectable class, have been obliged to do their own cooking. In fact, one is esteemed fortunate to be able to employ a cook.... Most ladies, too, have to be their own house-maids, sweeping out, dusting, and making the beds." These changes encouraged white women to adopt other innovations. Kitchens moved inside, "the ladies, not liking to bring dishes across the yard, as slave women had done when kitchens were detached from the main house." And there was a dramatic increase in the number of white households with stoves: "Not only stoves but sewing machines and other household utensils are much more common than before the war. The whites, having to do their own work, are clamorous for conveniences in which they would not indulge their slaves."[89] Northern merchants did a brisk and profitable business in stoves after the war. William Reynolds, operating out of Alabama on behalf of his uncle, a New York merchant, estimated that he would make an extraordinary profit of $900 to $1000 dollars on a $1300 invoice.[90]

No mechanical conveniences, however, could replace slavery. Before the war, ex-slave John Smith recalled, mistresses had different slaves assigned to the jobs of washing their feet, drying them, and fixing their hair. But, he added, the war and emancipation changed everything: "Some of dese missus atter de war died poor. Before dey died dey went from place to place livin' on the charity of dere friends."[91] Memories such as Smith's suggest the politics that must have informed black women's ideas about what freedom should mean. When Rachel Pearsall's cook claimed that the power of a higher authority, the federal government, made it impossible for her to any longer remain a slave, or to continue to cook for her mistress, her mistress was not fooled. Pearsall believed the cook's main goal was "to have the pleasure of seeing me cook." A Union soldier murdered Pearsall's cook for threatening to kill her mistress. Had she lived, she would have seen Pearsall placed among the ranks of the workingclass. At least for a time, Rachel Pearsall was a field hand.[92] "With

[89] A South Carolinian, "South Carolina Society," p. 679. The writer added that black women "are usually rather too uncivilized to be trusted with labor-saving machines requiring any delicacy of management." Black seamstresses, he wrote, unless "reared and trained in cultivated [white] families," did poor work and washer-women and ironers "badly damage the clothes they work on, iron-rusting them, tearing them, breaking off buttons, and burning them brown; and as for starch! – Colored cooks, too, generally abuse stoves, suffering them to get clogged with soot, and to 'burn out' in half the time they ought to last" (Ibid). See also Mary Jones to Mary S. Mallard, January 17, 1866, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 1318; Jane Turner Censer, *The Reconstruction of White Southern Womanhood, 1865–1895* (Baton Rouge: Louisisana State University Press, 2003), pp. 78–82.

[90] William C. Reynolds to H. L. Reynolds, January 16, 1866; ibid., February 17, 1866, Henry Lee Reynolds Papers, SHC.

[91] John Smith, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 15, pt. 2, p. 279.

[92] Mathew Page Andrews, comp., *The Women of the South in War Times* (Baltimore: The Norman, Remington Co., 1920), pp. 241–42; see also Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), pp. 47–48.

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the Civil War," DuBois wrote, "the planters died as a class."[93] So too did mistresses, no matter how hard they fought this recognition.

The Duty of the Hour

Former mistresses struggled to hold on to the racial privilege and the paternalistic ethos so central to their sense of self but had less and less room to maneuver. Black women stiffened their terms and white women sometimes felt alone in this battle. Obsessed with their own private and public defeats, former masters continued to show impatience with their wives' troubles, even when they sympathized, and the acrimony between white men and women increased.

The changes that war and emancipation brought to their homes, of course, devastated planter men as much as they did their wives and daughters. They witnessed the physical and emotional toil these changes took on white women; and they, too, complained of black women's "outlandish" behavior. Some, like George A. Holt, went to the aid of their wives. Nancy Johnson was working as a cook, washer, ironer, and dining room attendant earning two dollars a week for six days' labor. One day she accidentally broke the spout of a tea cup. Holt beat her severely. It was not simply the broken tea cup that had enraged him, but Johnson's defense of another employee, a fourteen-year-old girl. The "difficulty," Holt testified, was that Johnson had attempted to undermine his authority by "interfering with my *domestic affairs* exclusively. To wit; Having *occasion to punish* a small girl of about 14 yrs of age – (Ellen) for disobedience of orders or duty – sd Nancy Johnson became very much offended & advised her to leave (A girl that I had raised) and apply to the *Freedmans Beauro* (sic) for redress."[94] But even as white men understood the danger to the entire social order that the displacement of white women as "ladies" signaled, they were equally convinced that only a restoration of the material basis of the plantation household offered former mistresses any hope of regaining any semblance of their former status as ruling women. Unless they could rebuild the agricultural economy, the plantation household would remain shattered. Their immediate priorities were to regain political control and reconstruct plantation agriculture. They gave far less attention to problems within the plantation household.

Jefferson Thomas ridiculed his wife's obsession with domestic labor problems when he did not appear simply nonchalant. Gertrude Thomas's suggestion that they should force unmarried servants to marry drew a reprimand from him and an order that she not interfere lest they lose perfectly good hands.[95] When she insisted that white southerners must "*avoid politics*" and recognize that

[93] W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: 1860–1880* (1935; reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1973), p. 54.

[94] Testimony of Nancy Johnson, March 25, 1867, and Geo. A. Hoke to Col. S. S. English, March 29, 1867, BRFAL, KY, RG 105.

[95] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, May 7, 1869, p. 313.

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the "duty of the hour" was family survival, she revealed how very differently he and she understood the question of survival.[96]

Long before the end of the war, former masters began planning their comeback, along with northerners hoping to profit from the reconstruction of the plantation economy. Those who had been able to continue crop cash production during the war or to hoard cotton were best positioned to take advantage of the pent-up demand and high prices that immediately followed the war.[97] The vast majority – made prostrate by the war and emancipation – had nothing to bank on. The position of the largest and wealthiest prewar planters fairly matched that of the overly-ambitious overseer whom a former slave, Lucretia Heyward, remembered less than fondly: "He wuk, he sabe he money for buy slabs [slaves] and land. He gits some slabe, but he nebber git any land – de war come."[98] Without slaves, former masters who were able to retain their land were little better off.[99]

In the main, white women and men continued to see matters pertaining to the plantation household differently. A former mistress testified before the Senate Investigating Committee on Labor and Capital that the problems with black women "were growing worse all the time." A white man at the hearing was of the opinion that she exaggerated conditions. Mrs. George Ward then qualified her remarks in an important way. "I was speaking," she stated "about our household affairs and our relations with our household servants," who were "more incorrigible" than ever.

They leave us at any time they choose; they go from house to house, and we can place no dependence on them at all. That is the way they are doing; and if you dare to correct them or to suggest that their mode of working is not the best, or not the one you approve, they

[96] Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, October 22, 1868, p. 293.

[97] See, for example, H. L. Reynolds to the Honorable Secretary of Treasury, [July1866], Henry Lee Reynolds Papers, Ser. 1.2, 1866, Folder 10, SHC.

[98] Lucretia Heyward, *South Carolina Narratives*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 279–81, quote at p. 281.

[99] Since the end of the war, planters had worked feverishly to bring in crops already planted, to secure a labor force, and find the means to finance the 1866 crop. Some turned to antebellum factors newly reopened for business or the few who had been able to hold a position during the war. But technological innovations in shipping, communications, and the adoption of cotton compresses by inland shippers undercut the factors' position and their traditional base in the South. In addition, suppliers of manufactured goods moved to establish direct marketing connections with the growing interior markets. Credit suppliers also moved in. These changes were partly responsible for the weakened position of factors as middle men. At the same time, when they could, planters became furnishing merchants. As well, in cotton production, the South lost market share to Egypt, India, and Brazil. Still, as Gavin Wright notes, "cotton prices were high by historical standards during 1866–79, as American cotton continued to exert a dominant influence on the world price." Harold D. Woodman, *King Cotton and His Retainers: Financing & Marketing the Cotton Crop of the South, 1800–1925* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), pp. 245–94; Thavolia Glymph and John J. Kushma, eds., *Essays on the Postbellum Southern Economy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985); Gavin Wright, "Cotton Competition and the Postbellum Recovery of the American South," *Journal of Economic History* 34 (September 1974): 613–20. Quote is from Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South*, pp. 58–59.

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will leave you, or else be insolent about it.... It is a very hard life that we housekeepers here lead.... It is such a makeshift kind of life that it is actually dangerous to invite company three days ahead, because you cannot depend on your servants staying with you so long or doing what you want them to do if they do stay.... I have known them to leave when they knew that invitations were out for a dining in the house; they would just leave without any particular reason at all, but simply from some foolish desire for change.[100]

The result, Ward stated, was that few white people still had the same house servants they had before the war.

Senator Henry Blair, a member of the committee, seemed both amused and befuddled by Ward's testimony. After listening patiently, he finally put a question to her, the answer to which he had probably already surmised on the basis of her testimony. What, he asked, was her frame of mind about these things? Ward admitted that it was "a very fractious frame of mind," brought on by annoyance at having to be bothered by the "cares of housekeeping" with free labor. Firing those who displeased her had no effect, for "if you discharge one all you can do is to take another that somebody else has discharged." Perhaps tiring of the script, Senator Blair interjected that it seemed to him that she was a bit confused about who was discharging whom. "From what you say I infer," he remarked, "that, as a rule they discharge you, don't they?" "As a rule, they do," Ward agreed. Still, she stated, she would not know what to do without them. Even if they were "trifling," she would not think of replacing them with white servants. Besides, she added, "We are used to abusing them too."[101]

Former masters generally left to their womenfolk the job of restoring order on the domestic front. This did not mean, however, that they were averse to throwing their own weight against the ambitions of black women. They did in fact intervene in the affairs of the household immediately after the war. That intervention had three important characteristics. First, it usually involved black women whom they, not their wives, had hired. These were women contracted as field hands but called on to do extra work in the homes of planters or their overseers. Second, while planters rarely took part in disputes over pay, hours, or work conditions between white women and the women they hired specifically for house work, when they did, it was often intensely violent. Third, white men kept up their criticism of white women's domestic capacity. The problems white women had managing household servants after the war fueled this criticism. In all these matters, white men's involvement was sporadic, indicating their general alienation from domestic issues. It was the tightness in the labor market for domestic servants that most often brought white men into the picture. Women hired for field labor, but ordered to take on uncompensated additional labor in their employers' households (or in the households of their overseers), might or might not respect the order.

[100] Testimony of Henry M. Caldwell and Testimony of Mrs. George Ward, *Senate Committee Report*, IV: 343.

[101] Ward Testimony, *Senate Committee Report*, IV: 344–445.

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The staggering losses in property, political, and social power stripped former masters of their accustomed ability to satisfy the requirements of southern paternalism and patriarchy. They watched their wives and children do work previously deemed suitable only for slaves or black people. Further, black men had received the right to vote – the steadfast hallmark of true manhood in the modern world – a right that elite men had long prevented even poor white men from acquiring. Even when white men, like Augustin Taveau and Jefferson Thomas, opined that white women's domestic troubles resulted not only from emancipation but also from their failure, long before the war, to take control of their households, they were not relieved of a sense that they, too, as men, had failed. That feeling could lead them to try to help bring order to the domestic space.

Out of frustration, white men turned to the only source of "captive" labor they had – the women they employed in the fields to do extra ironing or to cook when the cook hired for the purpose quit, fell sick, was just weary of it all, or when they either could not afford a cook or find one to hire. When these women protested, violence often ensued. Eliza Jane Ellison lost her life because she wanted to know how much she would be paid when she was ordered to wash extra clothes "which she was not bound to do by her contract." Her employer's wife considered the question insulting and they argued. She turned to her husband, Dr. L. B. Walton, insisting that he force Ellison to do the extra laundry. Dr. Walton agreed that Ellison's refusal constituted an intolerable insult.

The argument resumed on a subsequent day with Dr. Walton calling Ellison a "God dam bitch" and ordering her to shut up. According to the testimony of her husband, Samuel Ellison, Walton then threatened greater harm and ordered Ellison off the premises. She refused, stating that she would not leave until the expiration of her twelve-month contract, whereupon Walton drew his pistol. Ellison tried to protect herself but the bullet went through her abdomen. Shot on December 12, 1866, she died the following day. Four days later, the court acquitted Dr. Walton of murder. Four Tennessee justices of the peace heard the case of *The State of Tennessee v. Dr. L. B. Walton*, finding the defendant "not guilty of either murder or manslaughter but that he killed Jane Ellison (col) in his own self defense at the time and place stated ... and was justifiable in the law in so doing."[102]

Few such disputes over overtime work ended in murder, but violence was not uncommon. When Linda Brown refused a request by her employer's agent to "do a large ironing" for him after she had completed her work in the field, the agent beat her on her head with a hoe.[103] Clary Dean's employer beat her head with a hickory stick. Dean had gone from the field to cook at her

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[102] Statement of Justices of the Peace, T. O. Tarpley, James Cook, James N. Thornhill, and James Randolph, Acting Justices of the Peace in the case of the *State of Tennessee vs. Dr. L. B. Walton*, December 17, 1866, enclosing Affidavit of Samuel Ellison, December 17, 1867, TN, ser. 12, Affidavits and Outrages, RG 105.

[103] Affidavit by Sam Brown, July 16, 1866, Letters Received, ser. 933, box 21, GA Sub-Assistant Commissioner, RG 105.

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landlord's house when the trouble began. She made biscuits, which he counted both before and after they were baked, and accused her of stealing one, which she denied.[104] Unlike Brown and Ellison, Clary Dean worked regularly as a field hand as well as her landlord's cook and she spun thread at night.[105]

Generally speaking, despite their occasional intervention in household labor disputes, white men proved much less sanguine than white women about the possibility of restoring prewar relations of power. South Carolinian Augustin L. Taveau was certain they could not be. He was finally convinced, he wrote, that black people had never been contented as slaves and would never be satisfied with anything short of freedom. It was foolish to think otherwise, he wrote:

> Does the Jew look hopefully for the Messiah? – so has the Negro for forty years been looking for the Man of Universal Freedom; and when his eager ear caught the sounds of his voice thundering at the bars of his prison door, think you that the watchfulness of years was to be drugged into fatal sleep by the well meant kindness of his keeper? Think you that he paused to ponder whether he should starve or fatten in freedom? Nay–he loved us, perhaps not less, but freedom more.... We gave him a plenty of seed, etc. in his cage, but he prefers the privilege of selecting his own food – let him go.... This is language that may grate harshly upon certain ears – but they who have knocked about in camps for four years, and have pondered deeply in the causes, effects, and facts of this awful war, have arrived at conclusions like the foregoing.[106]

Another planter responded similarly when his wife seemed determined to keep a woman enslaved he had informed was free. He, too, invoked the experience of war as a lesson for moving on. The former slave's daughter recalled him saying that "if she had been through wid what he had been through wid she could give mother up as free as takin' a drink of water."[107] John Jones was also ready to move on, and told his sister so in response to her unceasing complaints about servant problems. They must all stop "clinging too much to a race who are more than willing to let us go," he wrote.[108] In this vein, South Carolinian John S. Palmer counseled his married daughter. "We are all now quite disheartened and cast down," he wrote, and the time was "evidently approaching when perhaps the most menial offices will have to be performed by the family.... we must go down to the lowest depths before we can touch bottom and rise again."[109]

104 Affidavit of Clary Dean, July 10, 1866; Letters Received, ser. 933, box 21, GA, Sub-Assistant Commissioner, RG 105.

105 Affidavit of Clary Dean, July 10, 1866.

106 Augustin L. Taveau to "Hon. William Aiken," April 24, 1865, Taveau Papers, DU. Taveau titled his letter to Aiken, "A Voice from the South." A nearly identical version of the letter was published in the *New York Tribune*, June 10, 1865.

107 Jane Anne Privette Upperman, *North Carolina Narratives*, vol. 15, pt. 2, p. 368.

108 Rev. John Jones to Mary Jones, August 21, 1865, in *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, ed. Robert Manson Myers (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 1292. See also Nell Irvin Painter, "Introduction: The Journal of Ella Gertrude Thomas: An Educated White Woman in the Eras of Slavery, War and Reconstruction," in Burr, ed., *The Secret Eye*, p. 54.

109 John S. Palmer to Elizabeth Palmer Porcher, December 29, 1867, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, pp. 575–76.

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As he counseled his family on the adjustments in their lives that war and emancipation required, Palmer acknowledged defeat on a number of scores. His family no longer had a washer, but Palmer wrote that former slaveholding families must accept that "old habits and manners" were things of the past, that they no longer owned people who could be made to work for them. Like Taveau and Jones, he had come to the conclusion that black people would move on in total disregard of the needs of white people. White people had to move on, too. He held out hope that "old habits" learned under the radically different circumstance of slavery would dissipate with a new generation of white southerners "with new hopes and new habits." That generation "must live close, work hard, and trust in a good God."[110]

In the Palmer family, some of the women seemed to agree. "What is the use of trying to keep so many servants when there is no money to pay them," concluded Harriet S. Palmer, perhaps the most level-headed of John S. Palmer's children. "The sooner we come down to our means the better."[111] Besides, there was little else many former masters could otherwise do. Emma LeConte's father was useless to help her when he himself "worked like a negro . . . enduring every kind of fatigue," and when he himself was forced to man a flatboat to transport his corn. In general, Confederate men, returning from war neither "exulting" nor "victorious," could marshal little enthusiasm about the problem of missing or insolent cooks.[112]

Paul C. Cameron was not unconcerned for his wife's "constitution" under her "domestic trials," but he, too, tried to spell out to his family the difference they would know in their lives. When one of his daughters asked for money, he explained the toll of taxes, debt, and his continued efforts to educate his children on an estate greatly diminished by the abolition of slavery. He sent her five dollars along with this severe admonition: "Make the most of your money and time – fit yourself for a useful life – I shall have no fortune to bet on my children – all will have to make their own way." It was the same advice – marbled with a dose of racism – he gave to his son, Duncan, in response to a request for a new pair of shoes:

You have very many wants. Your letters hardly ever fail to tell of some want. When I had the money I ever felt glad to furnish my dear children as to anything that they needed – But I am obliged to tell you my dear boy that I have no command of cash and find it difficult to provide my large family with what I know they need. And I look forward this winter to not a little anxiety on the subject of wood and clothing –. . . . We are to have a great revolution in society & social life and those who do not now go to work & make a manly effort to sustain themselves and families will go down. . . . You *will* have

[110] John S. Palmer to Elizabeth Palmer Porcher, December 29, 1867, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 576.

[111] Harriet R. Palmer to Elizabeth Palmer Porcher, December 29, 1867, in *World Turned Upside Down*, ed. Towles, p. 577.

[112] LeConte Diary, January 31, 1864; February 19, 1865; June 27, 1865, SHC; Joseph G. Stockard to P. C. Cameron, December 22, 1865, Cameron Papers, SHC. The work in particular that triggered LeConte's remark, interestingly, involved her father's having merely to carry her Aunt Mary's baggage.

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to *labour* to live either by your *head* or by your *hands*! . . . We are now if possible more than anxious that you are making the *best* use of your time – Have nothing to do with a negro.[113]

Paul Cameron was no doubt distracted by other matters large and small, from trying to get his plantations running again, to facing debts he would have considered insignificant before the war. Trying to fix his wife's servant problem may have paled before the prospect of being dunned for $53.40 for two lots of fruit trees he had purchased in the winter of 1861, just before the war broke out. That his debtor apologized for having to present the bill probably offered little consolation. Only after their political rights and the plantation economy had been restored, former masters believed, could they "take up and dispose of the grand issues in which our welfare as a people are entirely blended." Otherwise, Cameron wrote, "our doom is fixed."[114] Cameron focused on his cash crop and his New York factor drove a hard bargain. For example, in 1870, he was given thirty days to pay for an order of guano or else the factor expected him to ship his "entire crop" to be held to pay advances made to him. As for his experiment with peanuts, the company advised him not to ship because the market was overstocked. "We regret," the agent wrote, "that you had such poor luck in your speculation."[115]

In fact, planters' economic pressures fueled their criticism of their wives' domestic capacity. Deeply in debt and facing the loss of his plantations, William Bull Pringle scolded his wife for spending even small sums. For his wife, Mary Pringle, his criticism stung all the more because she had seen her life reduced to scrounging for cash and taking in boarders. She, no doubt, thought such scolding downright distasteful coming as it did from a man who spent his days crying and seemingly paralyzed by severe depression and alcoholism. In 1870 alone, William Pringle spent $11 on brandy and $157.80 on 128 gallons of whiskey, consuming an average of nearly one and a half quarts of whiskey per day. The following year, crushing debt forced the sale of the family's main plantation, purchased at $160,000, for $10,000.[116]

Once they had accomplished the defeat of black people politically and the restoration of undemocratic governments in the South, white men turned to the household. Their victory paralleled fundamental alterations in southern agriculture. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the once powerful rice districts of South Carolina and Georgia were in a downward spiral from which they would not recover. Business conglomerates had put down stakes in the

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113 Paul C. Cameron to Pauline [Cameron], May 26 [1865]; Paul C. Cameron to [Duncan Cameron], September 27, 1865, Cameron Papers, SHC. Several months later, Duncan informed his father that he had "resolved to work instead of loafing." (Duncan Cameron to [Paul C. Cameron], January 8, 1866.)

114 P. C. Cameron to [recipient unclear], September 5, 1865; P.C. Cameron to [Duncan Cameron], February 17, 1865, Cameron Papers, SHC.

115 Williams, Black & Co. to Thomas Carroll, April 14, 1870; ibid., April 26, 1870; ibid., February 16, 1870, Thomas Carroll Papers, Correspondence, 1865–69, DU.

116 Côté, *Mary's World,* pp. 274, 284–85.

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Mississippi Delta. Advances on credit became harder to get and even harder to repay. Planters and laborers were on the move seeking the best advantage. These changes and disruptions had an impact on the bargaining power black women could wield in negotiating for better wages and working conditions. The extent to which it made a difference is unclear but that black women could no longer call on Union troops or the Freedmen's Bureau to assist them in difficult situations must have made a difference. In addition, Republican office holders sympathetic to their plight had been routed and the spaces to build an independent life though farming severely reduced.

Even these changes, however, were insufficient to completely stop black women from pushing their own agendas, forcing former masters and mistresses to adopt new strategies. In the end, it would take, additionally, a movement of white women, initiated and run by them – grounded in memorial associations buttressed by Lost Cause propaganda and the organization of "home service" courses – to fully return white men to the ideological and practical task of reconstructing white womanhood. Former mistresses like Mary Chesnut contributed by reimagining the past, remembering and disremembering as the need demanded. They memorialized the years of their dispossession, passing off legend as history so successfully that the legend came to be remembered as the history. Still others dressed themselves as rebels even when they could no longer dress themselves as mistresses. Black women did not give up either. Long after the war, as white women dressed in grey and dug in their heels, black women continued to press their rights as a free people entitled to the everyday freedoms of speech, mobility, personal liberty, and to the right to build their families and households according to their own light.[117]

[117] Mary Rowland to Mrs. [Paul C.] Cameron, January 20, 1866, Cameron Papers, SHC; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 252–53; George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. 238–39.

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