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# Effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction of the women of the South as portrayed in modern American novels

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THESIS

# EFFECTS OF THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION ON WOMEN OF THE SOUTH AS PORTRAYED IN MODERN AMERICAN NOVELS

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# INTRODUCTION

"Praise de Lawd! We'se all free now, (...) de white folks and de niggers too." (1)

Such was the sentiment of a negro toward the end of the Reconstruction Era. It might well have been applied to describe the liberation of Southern women from a bondage of varying degrees and types, ranging in intensity from conventional adherence to custom, to the actual curtailment of personal liberty. They had precious few "rights" as we understand the term today.

The emancipation of the slaves profoundly influenced the lives and characters of our Southern women. Slavery was so firmly rooted in their tradition they could not conceive an existence in which it played no part. They were convinced that its collapse would mean the destruction of all that was good and fine in their lives. Yet this "peculiar institution" actually operated to stifle the development of their highest powers. When the dreaded catastrophe occurred, they could not foresee that it would deliver them from

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(1) Laura Krey, And Tell of Time, p. 504

the feudalistic civilization which restricted their every activity. Paradoxical though it seems they were to build from its ruins, a shining monument to their own glorious courage. They were to emerge from the ensuing chaos with changed standards, newly developed initiative, and unbeaten paths of opportunity opening new vistas before them. They could have gained their freedom in no other way than by the complete destruction of slavery.

The cataclysm of Civil War wrought great changes in the thought and position of all the women in the conquered area. To determine the degree and extent of such a revolution requires an insight into conditions prevailing before the War's destruction effaced them. In order to round out the picture, an appraisal of changes which took place during the conflict, and their consequent effects in the post-war era is necessary. The period from 1860 to 1877 has been chosen for discussion, not because it represents a complete cycle - far from it; but it does include within that seventeen year span a transition from the old way of life to the beginning of a new and different one. It signifies the period wherein the greatest changes took place. The closing date marks the end of the Reconstruction Governments and while the political

aspects of the period will not be considered, they were influential in shaping the course of events which brought about reversals of position, readjustments of social status, and permutations of ideas.

The word "changes" has so many facets it may very easily be misconstrued. It does not in this case imply the complete suppression and annihilation of the aristocratic Southern woman, nor the resurrection into noble womanhood of "poor white trash" and freed negresses. Rather will it attempt to show the destruction of old barriers and the general improvement of the basic situation for these three classes of women despite the terrors of War and Reconstruction. The betterment of conditions was not apparent to the actors in the drama, but the necessary factors were, nevertheless, present.

The object of this study is to survey the field of modern novels dealing with the period of Civil War and Reconstruction, to determine what effect these events had in changing the traditional status of women in the South. For validation of historical facts it will be necessary, occasionally, to present authentic accounts from Histories, and actual personal experiences as related in Diaries and other forms of literature.

Historians, novelists, and magazine writers have all contributed greatly to a more thorough understanding of the role played by women in the changing scene. So far as the writer has been able to ascertain, no one has combined fact and fancy, History and Literature, to reveal the reactions of aristocrat, poor white, and negro women, to events which changed the course of their lives. The topic will be treated under three headings. The first will deal with women of the ante-bellum South. The second will show how they responded to the tocsin of War. The effects of Reconstruction on these women will be the final chapter.

Many American novelists have been intrigued by the romantic possibilities offered by tales of the Civil War. These have been handled in a variety of ways. Some few have dealt with its influence on the abolitionist North. Others have recorded its reactions on the West, but the great majority found an almost limitless field in the effects of the tragedy on the South. The tinder which aided the great conflagration was the novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," by Harriet Beecher Stowe - a Northerner who was unfamiliar with the Southern System which she so cruelly flayed. It created a furore out of all proportion to its literary value,

but it was a powerful indictment against slavery. It gained more anti-slavery disciples than all the fiery speeches of the abolitionists. As Richard Acton heatedly declared,

> "Good God, nobody here realizes what Mrs. Stowe's done with her book. A false picture but with enough truth in it to make the whole thing believed. (...) hundreds of thousands of people, millions in Europe believe it. It's their conception of the South."(2)

President Lincoln is said to have remarked upon being introduced to Mrs. Stowe, "So, you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!"

Time is a great leveler which relegates the hysteria and partisanship bound to be displayed in sectional strife to the background, allowing only the important issues, vital and uncluttered, to remain. Historical novelists some generations removed, benefit by a clear, unbiased appraisal of a much-contested problem. Thus writers of the last quarter of a century should be more accurate in detail, and, on the whole, less prejuidiced than those of an earlier period.

The Southern women depicted in the more recent literature are far more human and realistic than the perfect creatures previously portrayed. Yet they are no less lovable or charming than their fictitious

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(2) Herbert Ravenal Sass, Look Back to Glory, p. 65.

sisters. The revelation that their pretty helplessness was merely a pose, detracts not in the least from the reader's admiration for their sterling qualities which were later exhibited when adversity struck. Just as Mrs. Stowe's novel gave the world a one-sided picture of slavery - so were romantic writers responsible for the popular notion that the fascinating "belle" was typical of all Southern women. Few saw the woman of the lonely plantation or small farm, born into a state of society from which there was no escape. Authors of our own times peer behind the glamorous backdrop to witness the bustle and activity which contributed to the beauty of the scene in its entirety. They have no intention of blurring the popular pictures painted by earlier writers, but only of placing them in the proper focus.

Thomas Nelson Page delighted in portraying heroines of "peach bloom and snow, languid, delicate, saucy." He idealized the women of the old regime and preserved for future generations a romantic picture of the ante-bellum South, "a reflection of the old serene candlelight we all once talked and danced in." While realizing the narrowness of such shallow types Owen Wister is in complete agreement with Page on the

poignant qualities they possessed.

One of the best known of the Southern group of novelists, George Washington Cable, excelled in vivid descriptions of the life and picturesque beauty of the Old French quarter in New Orleans. His stories have the fault of overemphasizing the weaknesses of the Creoles, and the author was greater as an artist than as an historian of social conditions. To him, however, American readers owe the interpretation of a phase of Southern life that is little known and the perpetuation of scenes of beauty that are now but memories of the past.

A Virginian novelist Miss Ellen Glasgow chooses for her heroines the underprivileged women of the South - those, "worn by hardness, crippled by poverty, embittered by sorrow." Another tragic type, she feels, is the woman - forgotten in even the most aristocratic circles - the old maid whose ambitions have been thwarted in an attempt to conform to the conventional pattern of living. Bound by the fetters of a society which taught that marriage was the consummation of every woman's existence, she was forced to forego her yearning for an artistic or literary career. Miss Glasgow, though lacking the color of earlier writers,

was exceedingly clever in presenting and interpreting social tendencies.

The purpose which this group of novelists set out to accomplish seem to have been two-fold (1) to perpetuate the grace and charm of a civilization predestined to vanish from the earth (2) to protest against social and economic inequalities which allowed a despotic oligarchy to reap rich rewards at the benefit of a class far more numerous, but less clever and wealthy.

# CHAPTER I

## WOMEN OF THE ANTE-BELLUM SOUTH

There were three distinct classes of women in the ante-bellum South. Each class was as clearly defined and separate from the others as the stratification of a caste system could make it. To bridge the gap between the lower and upper levels of society was practically impossible. The aristocrats had a proud heritage. Being well-born and well-supplied with this world's goods, they had leisure to cultivate the gracious attributes of fine living. Accustomed as they were to deference and respect, they wore carelessly the mantle of superiority.

There was little or no contact between the two groups of white people. Struggling to obtain a meager existence in a poorly-balanced economic system, the poorer whites were often vulgar, crude, and weak in their living. Generations of hardship and ignorance had dulled their perceptions. With few exceptions they meekly accepted their hard lot. At intervals they would become disgruntled at the injustices of a social system which gave the patricians so much while giving them so little. Business contacts between the two groups were

curt and impersonal. The aristocrats distrusted the poor whites, generally classifying them as "shiftless," and "no account." The poor whites in turn despised the negroes, conscious that it was they who were, directly, if innocently, responsible for their misery and poverty. Many of the slaves who had absorbed some of the culture and mannerisms of their owners exuded their scorn for "poor white trash." This added fuel to the fire of racial intolerance.

Between the negress and her mistress there was a strong bond of affection. The well-born lady was genuinely concerned over the development of high ideals in her slaves. Her firm but kindly manner won the respect of her servants. They admired strength of character in others because their own was apt to be undeveloped. Each contributed, in totally different ways, to the mutual well-being of the other. The mistress assumed the responsibility of providing material necessities for her domestics; the handmaiden had only to perform the duly appointed tasks for her mistress. One commanded; the other obeyed. One was regal; the other servile. Yet their very association knit them closer, and strengthened the ties of loyalty.

No country in the world was ever able to boast of a nobler, purer, more refined gentlewoman than was found in our Southern States before the Civil War. Surrounded by an environment of gracious hospitality, she developed rare social gifts and accomplishments. Her poise, feminine charm, and beauty were widely heralded. Her purity of character was the toast of men of the South. These gentlemen never wearied of singing peons of praise in her honor. The pre-war South placed woman on a lofty pedestal and Southern chivalry worshipped at her shrine.

From earliest childhood she was carefully trained to develop the feminine qualities of modesty and gentility. She was the delight and pride of her family to which she, in turn, was tenderly devoted. That she lacked the stronger qualities of mind and character that are born only of trials and hardships, may be conceded. The firm assurance of those who learned from experience the knack of making their way among strangers was also lacking in her. Her sheltered nature inclined her to be timid and dependent. She was shielded from unpleasantness of any kind. Vulgar speech, sordid facts, and harsh truths were all tabooed in her presence. Society formed a pattern of conventionality to which she must strictly adhere.

> "That such a life with its peculiar romance and excitement was a powerful stimulant to deep thought and brooding sentiment, giving to the character of the Southern woman an undertone of pathos and intensity that's like the sad and tragic refrain of her whole life, we can easily understand." (1)

Men of the South, blinded by an excess of chivalric devotion, did not understand that the most sincere admiration for woman is expressed in an appreciation of her nature and her true place in the social order. Southern woman could not have been freed in any other way save by the complete wrecking of the old order.

Education was highly regarded and diligently sought for children of the gentry. Tutors were hired whenever possible, so that parental influence might still be maintained. In the absence of such good fortune the parents assumed the task of instructing their progeny. Little girls were trained in the fundamental subjects, and in addition were given practice in etiquette, art, and the classics. For higher education ante-bellum girls were dependent on female colleges established chiefly by churches. Isolation and lack of good local facilities hindered woman's enlightenment below the Mason-Dixon line. But it was not considered essential for young ladies to attain a high degree of

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(1) Amory Dwight Mayo, "The Woman's Movement in the South," New England Magazine, 5:252, October, 1891.

book learning. There were some who held the opinion that the less a girl knew about life the more able she was to contend with it. Those who did possess a better than average education were loath to reveal the fact lest they lose favor for seeking intellectual accomplishments unbecoming in a Southern gentlewoman.

This lack of higher education does not imply that they did not possess mental qualities of a high degree. On the contrary, if they were shy on book knowledge, they exhibited remarkable intelligence in the administration and execution of their extremely large households. The novelists are in part responsible for the fallacy that Southern women were languid, pampered idlers. Actually, they were among the world's busiest women.

> "That she contributed less in labor, especially manual labor, to the support and economy of the household than women in like financial condition elsewhere may be granted. But this was not because she was unable or unwilling to work, but simply because it was unnecessary." (2)

It was her task to plan, direct, and oversee all domestic operations. With skill and patience she trained the negro servants of her household to perform their various tasks.

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(2) Wilbur F. Tillett, "Southern Womanhood as Affected by the War," The Century Magazine, 21:9-10, November, 1891.

To her was delegated the tremendous duty of supervising the welfare of the slaves. She saw that they were supplied with sufficient rations to insure physical well-being. Cloth for their clothing was purchased in bolts, and alth ough she did not do the actual sewing, it often fell to her lot to get down on her hands and knees on the floor to cut out the garments. As the nearest doctor was often miles from the plantation, it was necessary for her to be able to prescribe for the minor ailments of her charges. In her storeroom was a miniature apothecary shop from which the necessary medication was dispensed. When a slave was ailing, it was her duty to visit the slave quarters and do what she could to hasten his recovery. In critical cases she often remained all night ministering to her patient. On other occasions she might have to step into the breach caused by a quarrel between a negro couple. Her charges turned to her in all emergencies sure of obtaining advice and help. Is it any wonder that many of these women often earned the undying devotion of faithful slaves!

She managed the distribution of supplies like a supervisor in a Commissary Department. This was quite a feat of administration. Surpluses were placed in

storerooms especially suited for the purpose. The true badge of a plantation mistress was the bunch of keys she wore hanging from her waist. As everything was kept under lock and key, she was rarely seen without them. They were seldom entrusted to anyone else and were surrendered only under unusual circumstances. It must have caused Frances Larne quite a twinge to relinquish her keys to her new daughter-in-law as a sign of her own abdication as mistress.(3) Ann, irked by this responsibility suffered no qualms at transferring both keys and duties to the Major-Domo of the manor.

The kitchen was so vital a part of the plantation that no woman could afford to entrust its management to a corps of slaves. Unless she was fortunate enough to fall heir to a group of well-trained domestics, she generally had to enter the kitchen as a culinary instructor. This was not always an easy or a pleasant task. Slaves were not all ideal servants, for the owners did not always manage to get rid of the trying and unprofitable ones. Every household operation, therefore, called for constant scrutiny. Although slavery released the patrician from menial drudgery, it overtaxed her capacities in various other ways.

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(3) Gwen Bristow, The Handsome Road, p. 88-89.

"It is no wonder that a Georgia women, when she heard the negroes were really free, gave a sigh of relief and exclaimed, 'Thank Heaven! I shall have to work for them no more.' She was but one of the Southern ladies that exulted in their own emancipation." (4)

The tradition for hospitality received its impetus in the leisurely, unhurried life before threatening war clouds loomed on the horizon. Magnificent dinners, elaborate balls, and superb entertainments were lavishly executed. No detail was neglected, no expense spared to guarantee the pleasure of the guests. Porticoed Georgian mansions with their thousands of unused acres surrounding their cultivated lands, their hundreds of black bondsmen, their paneled rooms and lovely portraits, beauty and opulence, often resounded to strains of merriment. Lavish as they undoubtedly were, planters seldom lived too far beyond their means.

"The grace of life, the grandiloquence of gesture which tended to spread with the plantation system throughout the South had as a fairly constant companion a common sense inhibition against genteel extravagance as well as against riotous living." (5)

The primary purpose of these social functions was to bring the young people of both sexes together. Mothers

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(4) J. L. Underwood, The Women of the Confederacy, p. 38.

(5) Ulrich B. Phillips, Life and Labor In The Old South, p. 356.

were anxious that their sons and daughters marry well, within their own class. Faithful to the continental tradition that it was degrading to marry beneath one's station, and since they were a minority group, they were not averse to inbreeding. This accounts for the fact that so many prominent Southern families could claim close relationship.

The married woman was not a figure in society. Gentlemen of the old régime in the South would say "A woman's name should appear in print but twice - when she marries and when she dies." (6) Her marriage prefaced a lifetime of devotion to her family. Vivacious, sprightly girls became sober, industrious matrons content to remain in the background and superintend the management of a smoothly organized plantation. Few are familiar with this less romantic aspect of Southern life. Miles from the nearest town, and exclusive of her own family, surrounded by subordinates, she led a lonesome life although by no means a boring one. Those who were opulent maintained town houses in bustling centers such as Richmond, Charleston, or New Orleans. Their prominence enlarged their social connections. Some of these ladies were remarkable for the force and strength with

(6) Myrta L. Avary, Dixie After the War, p. 23 footnote.

which they ruled their domain. Emily Fenwick was a splendid example of the purposeful, competent type of woman who shouldered the responsibility of two plantations and did it quite capably. (7) At the other extreme were some of the weakest, most helpless, self-centered, and selfish individuals to be found anywhere. Timid in spirit, languid in body, humbly dependent, they, like Eugenia Fenwick and the Bramwell sisters, clung supinely to the stronger members of the family.(8)

Fiction writers built romance around the young girl. They spun a web of glamour about her. It was she who was responsible for the popular conception of Southern women. She was an exquisite production of the class system. Gay, graceful, provocative, she was a bewitching creature. Prior to marriage, she was an outrageous flirt - but when she surrendered, it was for life. During courtship her life seemed to be one gay round of pleasures. Her conduct was always decorous and the niceties of good breeding and etiquette were diligently observed. It was customary for young ladies to be chaperoned at all public affairs, in the best

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(7) Francis Griswold, A Sea Island Lady.

(8) Ibid.

tradition of the day. This enchanting belle seemed concerned over nothing save self-adornment and the frivolities of the social whirl.

Apropos of personal adornment, the women of the South kept well-informed on the latest fashions. Bolts of the finest fabrics, handsome ribbons, and delicate laces were imported from Europe. Parisian modistes furnished the inspiration, and Southern ladies were quick to imitate. Dressmaking in those days was an art which required patience and finesse. Costumes were extremely elaborate and picturesque. Hoopskirts were an absurd but outrageously becoming fashion whose management always puzzled the men. It was a marvel to them the way those steel wires were controlled when a woman was bundled into a carriage, or ascended a narrow stairway. She managed hoopskirts and trains as gracefully and tactfully as she did her hard-headed husband! Gowns and other articles of apparel could be purchased in the shops of the big cities or imported from fashion centers of France. But more frequently expert seamstresses were hired to provide a wardrobe for a lady. Not infrequently the lady herself possessed a talent for dressmaking which permitted her to indulge her taste for more expensive materials as a result of her saving on labor. Pride prevented her divulgence of such a secret,

however, for at least two reasons. It was so much smarter to be able to disclaim any connection with the exacting task; then, too, it might give the mistaken impression that one's family was in reduced circumstances.

Self-support was rarely allowed among these sheltered women. To engage in any work outside the home was to compromise one's self and family. Southern men would not allow it, and even assumed the responsibility of supporting women relatives of distant kinship in straightened circumstances. The erratic, neurotic Eugenia Fenwick was patiently sustained by her Uncle Joseph in all her vain attempts to gain literary distinction in Charleston.(9) The old Beau firmly believed that self-support was the last resort of a self-respecting gentlewoman. Even charity was preferable to remunerative occupation, and able-bodied women often depended on the generosity of friends to maintain them rather than lower their standards of what was "genteel and refined." On the other hand, there were few opportunities for women to earn a livelihood in the ante-bellum South. Teaching - in one form or another was the most acceptable occupation, if dire necessity or sheer genius compelled it.

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(9) Ibid.

Here, then, is a picture of the patrician woman's status prior to the Civil War. Under the beneficent regime of chivalry they were subjected to social, educational, and economic restrictions. Their social contacts were regulated by custom, and hampered by tradition. Educational facilities were inadequate. Through economic restrictions they were excluded from participation in business and were denied entrance to the professions.

The non-slaveholding class of whites in the Old South ranged in variety from the self-respecting, industrious farming group to the ignorant, indolent ones commonly referred to as "poor white trash." According to the census of 1860 - only two million of the eight million whites in the South were slave-owners.(10) Then what of the vast majority who competed unfavorably with the large-scale plantation operators? Little is known of their struggle for a livelihood against the slaveholding monopoly. Their dull, unromantic lives did not attract the fancy of literary writers of the times as the exciting upper class did. The six million non-slaveholders or small slaveholders were scattered widely from plains to piedmont, from valleys to

(10) Ulrich B. Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, p. 339.

mountains. They ranged in standards from the disease-ridden, debilitated "white trash," to the industrious, independent farmers. In the mountains they comprised nearly all the population. Elsewhere they were the neighbors of the planters and wealthy townsmen. Numerous families living on sub-marginal lands found it difficult to eke a bare subsistence from the barren soil. They were constantly in debt, for it was almost impossible to make even a margin of profit on such unfertile land. Occasionally a poor family would own a slave or two, and these miserable chattels shared the extremities of fortune with their owners.

Slavery was partly responsible for racial deterioration among whites. Many of the poorer class were in a position to envy the lot of the slave. Housed in miserable shacks, subsisting on scanty fare, uneducated, and with little opportunity to improve their station, it is not surprising that they were depressed, listless, and unambitious. These factors operated to lower the moral tone and strengthen the hopeless despair of these poor creatures. But, wretched as they were, they took a certain pride in the knowledge that color aligned them on the side of the dominant class. Aware of their economic inferiority and jealous of the carefree security of the slaves, they fairly exhaled their

scornful contempt for the "niggers." The negroes, realizing the superior advantage they held, subtly derided them by artfully chanting such a song as this within earshot of one or two of the lowly whites.

> "Nigger pick de cotton, nigger tote de load,
> Nigger build de levee foh de ribber to smash,
> Nigger nebber walk up de handsome road,
> But I radder be a nigger dan po' white trash!
> Oh Lawd, radder be a nigger,
> Radder be a nigger, Oh my Lawd,
> Nigger nebber walk up de handsome road
> But I radder be a nigger dan po' white trash!" (11)

Poverty-stricken but proud, they refused to have their children taught manual trades inasmuch as negroes gave a "servile taint" to such occupations. Men could obtain work as woodcutters at the docks, a limited few as overseers, and a great many struggled to farm enough to feed their families. Every member of the family contributed his share to piece out the unstable economy. Domestic service was not open to white girls, and if it was they would not condescend to degrade themselves by accepting it. The diabolical situation condemned her, therefore, to misery and want. She would, however, consent to do fine needlework for an aristocratic lady, such as mending delicate laces or making quilts. The work was sporadic but the pitifully small wages alleviated some of the suffering.

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(11) Gwen Bristow, The Handsome Road, p. 50.

The striking contrast between the queen of the plantation and the impoverished drudge is excellently portrayed in "Handsome Road." (12) The author has drawn superb character delineations of their types in Corrie May Upjohn and Ann Sheramy. The latter, a charming daughter of a blue-blooded family, unfamiliar with privations of any kind arouses in the former envy at her luxurious mode of living, and bitterness at her serene acceptance of the homage paid her. Ann, completely unaware of the smoldering jealousy her attitude creates, innocently adds fuel to the fire. Corrie May, uneducated and underprivileged though she was, possessed an amazingly keen mind which put the plantation system on trial and condemned the rich planters for the wanton exploitation of poverty-stricken whites, free negroes, and slaves. Her one effort to arouse her own kind to revolt ended disastrously when she tried to quench their war enthusiasm by pointing out that they were about to defend the system which had denied them a decent living. Her reasoning was too advanced for them. Their perceptions had been dulled by generations of poverty and ignorance.

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(12) Ibid.

In the mountain and backwoods region of the South, affairs were in a deplorable condition. Woman was hardly more than a high grade domestic animal. She performed heavy tasks and shouldered great burdens while her husband sat around in idleness. She dragged in timber from the mountain-sides, worked long hours in the vegetable patch, and executed other chores requiring no small physical exertion. In the rude hovel which served as a house, she waited on table while her lord and master devoured the choicest bits of the frugal meal. Since dishes were scarce, the family all ate from the same bowl or took turns eating from the same plates. The woman, generally the last to eat, had to be content with the leavings. The entire furnishings of a mountain hut would probably not be appraised at more than twenty dollars. Poverty abounded in the Highlands of the South.

Mountain girls married at an early age. Any who reached the age of twenty without being wed were considered hopeless "old maids." Many were quite pretty in their youth, but overwork and the raising of a large family aged them prematurely. At thirty they were bent, faded, and much older in appearance than their years would warrant. "The cotton shifts and poke bonnets of the women, and their shapeless linsey-woolsey gowns,

varied not with the fashions of Paris or Philadelphia." (13) They were ignorant and illiterate, knowing nothing of the world of men and books beyond their own narrow horizon. Indeed, they scarcely ventured at all beyond a radius of a few miles from their own fireside. Odious comparisons were not possible to breed discontent with their strange uncomfortable mode of living.

The poor whites had to be content with simple diversions in their scant leisure time. They satisfied their social cravings with trips to town, dances at the crossroads, celebrations at harvest time and similar inexpensive forms of recreation. Occasionally, a wedding would call for more elaborate preparations. Neighbors cooperated in supplying refreshments in such events. A fiddler furnished lively music for the dance. Merriment was as prevalent in such instances as in the more subdued and refined gatherings in the stately plantation homes. On sadder occasions they had to attend the wake and burial of one of their friends or kinsmen. These marked the extent of their sociability.

Since children of the gentry were educated by tutors or sent to expensive private schools, there was no interest or agitation on the part of the influential, monied class to secure free, public education for all

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(13) Ulrich B. Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, p. 342.

the children of the South. They had no desire to be taxed for the training of a class whom they felt were incapable of appreciating the finer standards of life. One might see small, unkempt children assisting harassed parents in the fields, or lolling about becoming indolent copies of their elders. Educational progress and social improvement were tenaciously withheld from women of the poorer class in the Old South prior to the Civil War.

The negro throve and prospered in bondage as no other laboring class has ever done. They monopolized the advantages of the "peculiar institution." Their outlook, habits and experience varied as much as the color of their complexions or the contour of their faces. It required endless patience and skillful training to mold these ignorant creatures into the suave, efficient, domestic servants prevalent in the Georgian mansions of the pre-war South. The household slaves were considered privileged characters. They were chosen for certain desirable qualities which rendered them most suitable for constant contact with their owners. They enjoyed liberties which were denied to the coarser field hands. These latter were required to work from sunrise to sunset under the hot sun. In return for their manual

service all their material needs were supplied by their owners. They were singularly free from the cares and responsibilities attached to existence by self-support.

The slave-quarters resembled barracks, with huts of one or two rooms per family. They were crudely built but weathertight. Systematic inspection was made to ensure sanitation. Fuel was plentiful. Basic food rations were distributed regularly to each family. The food was plain but sufficient to maintain the health and strength of the laborers. Their clothing was coarse, and shoes were supplied only during the winter. Medical service was provided for the ailing, since a negro's importance lay in his ability to work. The aged and infirm were cared for if only to maintain the good-will of all in the "quarters."

Some chafed under the chains of bondage and proved troublesome as breeders of discontent. They may have possessed a cantankerous disposition, a real or fancied grievance, or a cruel, unjust master. Escape was the only solution for them, hence they became fugitive slaves. It was rare indeed to hear of a negress running away. There were reasons for this. She was naturally timid about depending on her own resources; she feared the punishment if caught; and

lastly, woman, as a rule, is more long-suffering than man and will patiently endure great injustice.

Those born in bondage knew no other existence and could imagine no worse disaster than to be sold away from the plantation of their birth. They were as much a part of the family as the sons and daughters of the planter. They shared the joy and grief of the "Massa" and "Missus." Whole-hearted loyalty and affection was unstintingly poured out upon those whom they loved and served. They were particularly attached to the "Missus." They revered and admired her; watched and obeyed her. She earned the devotion which later made them willing to die for her. After the day's work, the negroes were always ready for fun. Singing, dancing, and the playing of musical instruments were their favorite forms of diversion. Their melodious voices often entertained guests at the Manor, while the musicians among them furnished lively melodies for dances given by their owners. Their keen sense of humor and simple pleasures kept them happy. Holidays as enjoyed by the "white folk," usually meant more work for negresses, as it generally meant extra guests and parties. Christmas and New Year, however, were especially dear to the negro heart. They were allowed

privileges, denied them the rest of the year. Frequently their owners gave a party at the "big house" just for their pleasure. Gifts were bestowed on all. They loved the tradition and ceremony which the Yuletide brought.

To maintain the necessary discipline and prevent any mistaken notions of racial equality, the majority of whites treated the blacks as they would any kind of property - in an impersonal and impartial fashion. The slaves, far from resenting this attitude, respected it. They were essentially just, and even when chastised held no ill-will provided they had merited the punishment. They were sold only when they were troublesome, or when financial straits forced their master to part with them. Keen suffering was felt by these emotional people on separation of husband from wife, or parents from children. Their heartbroken pleas did not alter the cruel situation. This was one of the most inhuman and revolting phases of negro slavery.

During childhood, white and black children were inseparable playmates and companions. The young negro girl was given to a white mistress her own age, if possible, and the two grew to young womanhood with the negress gradually slipping from bosom friend into the

position of servitude which custom demanded. She imitated her mistress' manners, fell heir to her discarded clothing, shared her secrets, waited on her personally, and considered herself one of the favored few, fortunate enough to share the intimate home life of her betters. The bane of her existence was the fear of being banished from the house to perform the heavier labor in the fields. Gracie, the young mulatto in, "The Forge" experienced these very emotions. (14) She was allowed to sleep in a small room near Marcia, her young mistress. The mere suggestion of being sent to the slave quarters, which she heartily despised, would set her trembling.

When the mistress married, the slave accompanied her to the new home as Maria did in. "And Tell of Time." (15) The offspring of the young couple would be petted, fondled, and favored more than her own kinky-headed pickaninnies. The white youngsters adored their "Mammy" and while she scolded and ordered them around, she spoiled them outrageously. The first member of the household to greet Denis Warden on his

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(14) T. S. Stribling, The Forge.

(15) Laura Krey, And Tell of Time.

return from the battlefield was his Mammy.(16) The tearful, heart-rending re-union between the two was infinitely more touching than the later one between mother and son.

There were laws forbidding anyone to teach the slaves to read and write. While no provisions could lawfully be pursued for teaching negroes, these injunctions were often disregarded or completely ignored on the plantation. Many slaves displaying mental alertness were instructed in the forbidden subjects by master or mistress. It was not unusual to find them possessing more education than many of the members of the lower white class. Cassandra, the erudite member of the Vaiden family delighted in imparting knowledge to slaves as quick-witted and keen as young Gracie.(17) The great majority, however, were deprived of even the most elementary education. Their ignorance was an asset, not a liability, to their owners. Education by broadening their horizons would have created discontent and perhaps even rebellion among them. By keeping them simple and primitive, their masters were assured of a complacent, non-complaining labor class, satisfied with the primary essentials of life.

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(16) Marion Sims, Beyond Surrender, p. 10.

(17) T. S. Stribling, The Forge.

Restrictions hampered the slave at every turn. A set of laws enforced in Louisiana and the deep South and known as "The Black Code" restrained every impulse toward freedom. These French laws were "black," indeed but even blacker were those enforced farther North in Anglo-American communities. Speaking of these, Phillips says,

> "The regulatory statutes everywhere were frankly repressive. They forbade slaves to possess weapons, to beat drums or blow horns which might serve to convey signals, to strike any white person even in self-defense, to be out of their quarters after curfew, to travel singly without written authorization, to travel in groups without a white escort, to assemble at night unless a white person were present; and rural citizens in their capacity as militia were embodied into squads to patrol their designated beats and chastise any slaves caught in transgression."(18)

These precautions, although not always enforced to the letter, could be invoked to curb infractious elements in the slave population. They were denied civil, social, and political rights or even privileges which might infringe upon the security or interest of the whites. Outbreaks of any kind brought forth new statutes to make assurance doubly sure that the South should continue to be "a white man's country."

What conclusions may be drawn, then, concerning the opportunities open to women of the South in 1860?

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(18) Ulrich B. Phillips, Life and Labor in the Old South, p. 163.

The privileged upper class was the only one to receive any educational training. Even that was more cultural than practical. Girls of the middle class had no opportunity whatever, even in the cities where the few public schools were available. Their folks were far too proud to brand them with the stigma of "pauperism" then attached to free schools. Education for slaves was forbidden by law. While free of manual drudgery ladies were shackled by administrative cares. Poorer whites and slaves were victims of exhausting menial servitude. The aristocratic ladies enjoyed fine social distinction, but were hampered by outmoded traditions and conventions. Negroes, bubbling over with natural exuberance and free of temporal c ares, enjoyed life far more than many of the middle class who were often skimming the brink of ruin. The well-born lady had no more political or legal status than the slaves she ruled. The middle group were beaten by poverty. The lowest class was chained by slavery. In all matters of importance, women of the South were nonenities.

## CHAPTER II

## WOMEN DURING THE CIVIL WAR

The picturesque panorama of the ante-bellum South has been zealously perpetuated in literature and music. Closer investigation of details causes many of our chesrished ideals to crumble. We are disillusioned to find that the women we considered so glamorous were surprisingly practical and efficient. With some astonishment we learn that the ownership of slaves weighted the burden of responsibility instead of lightening it. So much attention has been given to the patricians and the slaves, in song and story, that we are apt to forget the large middle group which fitted neither category. How did these three groups react to the stimuli of War? What was their response to sacrifice and misery?

Necessity and adversity are splended moulders of character. Poverty and grief are great levelers. Women, frail and weak in luxury, often display a fortitude in times of stress totally unexpected. Trials which crush strong men often turn women into towers of strength. Women of the South were forced to undergo gruelling hardships to prove their intrinsic worth. This Chapter will attempt to reveal the successive

stages in the gripping drama which altered the status of women in the South and proved them richly deserving of the admiration which they had in former times earned so easily by merely exercising their charm. Fictional and actual accounts of the sufferings of Confederate women may give an insight into the convulsive struggle which wrought such great changes.

The fiery ordeal of four years of war tested to the utmost the strength and courage of women of the South. They responded magnificently to the challenge. Calling upon hidden well-springs of faith, and seemingly endless reserves of strength, they were an inspiration and a powerful force driving their disheartened fighting men to renewed efforts, and giving them new hope. Not without reason have they been accused of prolonging the hostilities. When haggard soldiers, overcome with the futility of their Cause, were on the verge of despair, the sight or memory of their tireless, undaunted women would whip their flagging confidence to redoubled efforts. Like the women of Sparta they sent forth their champions impervious to all but the nobility of their principles and their ultimate victory. Strange that silken women with Dresden China fragility could betray such fierce

purpose or steel themselves to the terrible trials such a course entailed! But once convinced of the rightness of a Cause women are inclined to be more ardent and relentless in its pursuit than men. Thus, while they were surfeited with the demands of slavery upon their time and energy they were indignant that the ultimatum of emancipation should emanate from any but the people of the South.

The credo that Right would triumph over Might was the sustaining belief which enabled them to carry not only their own heavy burdens, but to transmit that ideal to their sons, husbands, brothers, and sweethearts. That slaves were a God-given trust devolving upon a superior race of white men to instruct and uplift, was a firmly established theory in the Southland. None can deny that slaves were, materially, far better situated than their cunning betrayers in distant Africa who had sold them into bondage. Once acclimatized and accustomed to their fate, they thrived tremendously. Through generations of contact their owners knew how simple, child-like, and helpless they were without a firm and protecting hand to guide them. To suddenly remove this restraining influence and throw them upon their own pitifully weak resources was, to plantation owners, an

appalling crime which, they were sure, God would never permit. For centuries the benign, christianizing influence of Southern women had worked miracles in converting negro savages into a simple, trusting Christian race. With so many factors in their favor and sure of God's benediction, women of the South would not entertain the fear of failure. Theirs was a noble crusade which, they felt certain, would finally be crowned with the laurel wreath of victory.

The theory that the Negroes were unprepared for freedom with its attendant problems, runs like an ever-recurring thread through the pattern of historical fiction dealing with this period. Many believed, "that slavery was the best possible school for the negro race."(1) One shrewd enough to see its defects contended that "no method was provided for the graduation of pupils who had completed the course."(2)

The vials of Southern wrath were poured upon complacent Northerners who, unmindful of the dangers and difficulties involved, caustically demanded the liberation of the negroes. Another factor which convinced these dauntless women that their Cause was a noble,

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(1) Herbert Ravenal Sass, Look Back to Glory, p. 195.

(2) Loc. cit., p. 195.

defensive one, was the certainty that the enemy while hiding behind a cloak of righteousness was waging an offensive warfare for selfish, personal aggrandizement. This viewpoint is revealed by shrewd, deep-thinking characters in several novels, and in diaries of the time.

> "the Northern States never in any true sense freed their slaves. What they really did was this: having found that negro labor was not profitable in their climate, they adopted systems of gradual emancipation, so-called, which gave their slave-owners plenty of time to sell their slaves in the South. Then after selling their negroes to us and taking our cash for them, they announced grandly that they had ended slavery in their borders. So they had, and they had made money by it."(3)

When the first volleys of Fort Sumter re-echoed throughout the land there was feverish excitement and activity everywhere. Below the Mason-Dixon Line hearts were sad but courage was high, and the women were determined to send their warriors forth, fortified by memories of love and home. A succession of gay parties, balls, and entertainments more elaborate than any ever witnessed in a section already famed for its magnificent hospitality, were held to bid farewell to the men in Gray. The women outdid themselves in gaiety and charm. Never were they more fascinating or lovely. They wore their most exquisite gowns of brocade, satin, or lace. The priceless ornaments with which they decked themselves

(3) Ibid., p. 99.

vied with their own beauty. Lofty halls echoed to their gay laughter. Gleaming floors mirrored their twinkling feet. Hearts capitulated to their teasing banter. Buoyed by excitement and flushed with masculine admiration, they seemed not to realize the gravity of the situation or to fully appreciate its importance. Many a pang was suffered by chivalrous males at the thought of abandoning these dainty, helpless creatures to a life bereft, for however short a time, of man's guidance and protection.

At sumptuous dinner parties the festive board fairly groaned with tempting food. There were the traditional hams glazed and cooked to a turn, roast pig with the customary apple stuffed in its mouth, delicious yams, hot rolls, and delectable desserts. No gathering was complete without the ever-present punch-bowl to impart a convivial spirit to the guests. At the end of the meal the party would gather in one of the beautifully appointed rooms to dance, listen to good music, or be entertained in some manner planned by an ingenious hostess.

There was no dearth of stimulating amusement. The Hunt was a sport keenly enjoyed by expert riders, both men and women. Invited guests generally spent the

preceding night at the Manor as this sport required the participants to be ready at dawn. The thrills and attendant dangers of the pursuit made it all the more exciting. When the prey was captured they would leisurely return to the plantation where appetites, whetted by exhilaration and the morning air, were amply appeased.

The Tournament was another favorite diversion. This illustrates as well as anything could, the Medieval character of the Old South. The title and symbolism of the sport was directly descended from Feudalistic practices. Garbed in colorful costumes and armed with shining spears Knights sat astride their handsome chargers awaiting their call to the joust. The winner laid his trophy at the feet of his dearly beloved who was thus proclaimed "Queen of Love and Beauty." The runners-up had the honor of choosing her handmaidens. At a formal Ball in the evening, there was a delightful procession climaxed by the ancient ritual of crowning the Queen. While witnessing one of these spectacles Richard Acton was convinced that the South, still enamored of such folly, must inevitably bow before the onslaught of a more progressive enemy. He knew that slavery was as outmoded as the Tournament

with all its gaudy trappings.

> "The scene at which he was gazing assumed for him a darkly tragical significance; it was - the conception struck him like a blow - the final, the completely conclusive, proof that the South was doomed to perish."(4)

It was nevertheless a colorful and romantic pageant.

An inevitable consequence of the war hysteria was the increase in the number of marriages. Weddings performed during the first year were brilliantly colorful. The trim uniforms of the Confederate Army were an excellent foil for the elaborate gowns of the women. The sober ceremonies which took place in the later years of war were not so thrilling or gay. The grim presence of Death, stalking at the feast, chastened any spirit of frivolity. But the early weddings were not touched by the grim reality of experience. War was a high adventure which would end too soon in their romantic estimation. The risk involved did, however, lend excitement to all social events preceding actual combat. The glamour and chivalry of the Past reached a climax in these gala celebrations.

With such pictures to treasure the Confederate Army marched away with bands blaring, flags flying, and heads high. Dainty handkerchiefs fluttered in farewell.

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(4) Ibid., p. 241.

Eyes bright with unshed tears watched until the last line of Gray had vanished from sight. Then, and not until then did women give way to their grief and despair. So well did they control their emotions that few knew the pall of gloom which enveloped their hearts. In a heroic effort to make the leave-taking seem like an ordinary occurrence, some were tragically pathetic. Dinwiddie Wade's pretty wife was sure that in the haste and turmoil he had forgotten to pack important articles in the handsome, imported knapsack at his feet. To his intense embarrassment she inspected and counted off the items while they were waiting for the train at the station. This was merely a ruse to cover deeper feelings, but unfortunately it made the farewell seem bungled and not at all romantic. But all this was changed when he kissed his wife and daughter and said "Good-bye, my darlings." Mildred glanced at her mother to find her looking like a scared and helpless child.

> "But then, her mother was a child. The outer world had never touched her. Within her small circle of husband, family, and admirers, she had played at romance, the same light romance as when she was a young girl, and she was still just as innocent. Even now the prescience of the outer realities had not reached her; she was still a belle who had been parted from the best-looking beau in Richmond - and she had done it badly."(5)

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(5) Clifford Dowdey, Bugles Blow No More, p. 43.

The relentless broom of war swept the Southern States clean of all its vigorous manhood for four long and terrible years. Upon the shoulders of women fell the yoke of responsibility. There was no task too difficult, no job too repugnant, no work too stringent for them to perform. Their unflagging devotion to the Cause spurred them on to amazing feats of industry and endurance. There were at first no evidences of hardship. Export and import trade went on unmolested. The clumsy bungling of the North at Bull Run revealed the skill and advantage of the Army of the South. The superior strategy of Confederate Generals won many victories and heartened the South considerably. Thus, at first, beyond the added duties of assuming their men-folk's work in running the plantation, life went on as usual. When the tide of battle turned against them, and a ruthless blockade attempted to sever their life-line of supplies, their real suffering began.

Delicate hands, unused to any task harsher than plying an artistic needle or calling forth muted tones from musical instruments, struggled with coarse fabrics which were fashioned into garments for soldiers. Magnolia-petal skin became roughened performing numerous manual tasks to aid the Confederacy. Under the most

trying circumstances they accomplished feats which would have tested the power of men. They exhibited sterling qualities born of adversity and nurtured by necessity. They descended from the pedestals upon which Quixotic chivalry had placed them and pursued to the bitter end their heroic, self-appointed tasks. The versatility they displayed in overcoming obstacles was a revelation to the men who had fondly fostered a belief in their utter helplessness and dependence. It demonstrated that Southern women were capable of successfully accomplishing higher things than the delicate, fruitless pastimes which had occupied their attention in pre-war days.

The administrative experience of the planters' wives now became a distinct advantage. Without it the plantation system might have collapsed prematurely, thus shortening the war immeasurably. As it happened, they were sufficiently acquainted with the general routine to enable them to direct operations rather skillfully. They continued to cultivate cotton as persistently as ever. They were convinced that England would never permit an enemy to cut off the vital cotton supply which meant prosperity for her mills. It was the ace with which the South planned to trump the

carefully laid cards of the North. They staked all their hopes on the gamble and lost! When the blockade became effective, cotton became a glut on the market. Blockade-running with a cargo of cotton was highly profitable, but dangerous. It could dispose of only a fraction of the crop raised in the South. Bales were piled high at warehouses and wharfs. Soldiers of both armies later fought from behind their protecting shelter.

The mistress of a large plantation was faced by the problem of what to do with field hands for whom there was no longer sufficient work. Food shortages made necessary the increased production of vegetables, but while their efforts were noble, they were not successful in furnishing enough to feed the Confederacy. The majority of field workers were unskilled in anything but the care of cotton and were ignorant concerning the care and requirements of other products of the soil. Not all plants responded to the climatic conditions as well as cotton. Experimentation in times of emergency was oftentimes disastrous. The necessity of feeding and clothing the slaves still remained although the income and resources of the plantation were fast dwindling. New tasks were substituted to employ idle hands and to add, if possible, to the decreasing larder and supplies.

The problem differed somewhat depending on the size of the plantation, the number of slaves, and the self-supporting occupations pursued in each unit. In justice to the ingenuity of the mistress and the loyal cooperation afforded her by the slaves let it be said that they furnished large quantities of food for their fighting men and enough to meet their own needs as well. When the land was laid waste by the Union Army, even this little assistance was impossible. Idle slaves congregated in bewildered groups or wandered off to seek aid for themselves or their "white folk." Women reared in luxury were now faced with the performance of exhausting tasks. Without hesitation they threw themselves into the work with intense zeal.

It was a rare thing to find a disloyal woman. Their patriotism was so ardent that many of them, for the first time, left the sanctity of their homes to engage in duties which in former times would have been looked on askance. Fancied invalids arose from their couches to roll bandages, knit socks and make uniforms. Their services were solicited when casualties began pouring in from the battlefields. They responded with alacrity. Many lovely homes were transformed into hospitals to meet the exigencies of the situation.

They cooked wonderful meals for the sick and wounded out of their sparsely-stocked pantries. They raided their treasured linen closets and with never a qualm ripped exquisite textiles to make sorely-needed bandages. Delicate women who once would have swooned at the sight of blood learned to dress ugly wounds without a visible tremor. The false modesty which had been considered one of their chief attributes was banished forever. They were face to face with the elemental struggle for life. The stoicism with which they met the sights and sounds prevalent in the hospitals elevated them to new pinnacles in the eyes of their wounded compatriots. The writings of Confederate and Union troops are filled with praise and admiration for them. To them a wounded man of whatever side was sacred, and they dedicated themselves to his service. Knowing what these women had been accustomed to in the past, this new vision filled with amazement the men who thought they had known them of old. This, however, was merely one facet of the many-sided personalities they were to develop in response to the shifting scene.

To the majority of the less aristocratic farming class, the peremptory call to the colors presented a

serious problem. Wealthy planters had an abundance of trained help to carry on their daily activities, but the loss of one man on the small farms was a major catastrophe. Budge was so proud of his tiny plot of ground he thought others might covet and take it over if he, foolishly, ever left it. Conscription left him no choice in the matter.(6) From this larger group of small land holders the majority of the Confederate Army was recruited. Their pride of race, loyalty to the South, and small scale land ownership aligned them on the side of the planters. If they, perchance, owned a slave or two they were just as vehement in denouncing the North as if their chattels numbered in the thousands. They were blind to the fact that they were called upon to make sacrifices to defend a system which kept them perpetually impoverished.

Members of the Confederate Congress, consisting of slave-owners and their lawyers, under pressure of influential aristocrats, passed legislation exempting owners of twenty slaves from active military service. Buying bonds to furnish meal was another method employed by those who wished to escape army duty. Planters would often encourage their poorer neighbors to join

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(6) Gwen Bristow, The Handsome Road, p. 165.

up, by promising to see that their families were well cared for in their absence. Those of the upper class who did enter the conflict were frequently given easy berths far behind the lines to insure their safety. Such favoritism irked honest officers who decried such conditions.

What of the man whose lack of wealth and social position made such a course impossible? Now, as always he suffered his lot in silence and performed his duties with uncomplaining faithfulness. There were no celebrations prior to his departure. He and his family were too preoccupied with the sober details of arranging their affairs, to waste time in merriment. His farewell was no less significant nor poignant than his more fortunate neighbor. Young sons of these families, eager for adventure, readily volunteered. Those who could not get parental permission because of their youth, would frequently enlist by falsifying their age. They seldom analyzed the cause underlying the conflict. It was considered treason for Corrie May in her fierce ardor to attempt to tell them the truth.

> "You know what this war's about?" she demanded. "I reckon you don't because nobody ain't told you. The Yankees want to come down here and turn the niggers loose. And suppose they do? Why should you care? You all ain't got no niggers. Let them that's

> got niggers fight to keep them! You po' halfwits strutting in them fine uniforms - ain't you grand! I could just bust laughing. Why ain't you all got nerve enough to tell them to hell with their war?"(7)

The crowd was angry. Clods of dirt were thrown at her and in the melee that followed she was beaten, kicked, and dragged. Her hair was torn out by the roots, and blood trickled into her eyes. Merciful oblivion blotted out the rest.

The "pineywoodser" with but vague ideas of the issues at stake, was nevertheless always ready for excitement. The idea of being paid, to do what was second nature to him, was alluring. If he was shrewd he could offer to substitute for some wealthy pacifist, have his fun and get a neat sum in the bargain. But if indolence or indifference caused him to ignore the war, conscription usually caught up with him. He may have resented the regimentation which cost him his personal freedom, but usually he felt little concern about the management of affairs during his absence. The women were well used to the care of such details. They and the half-grown "young'uns" would get along well enough until his return.

The burden of maintaining the home of the middle-class farmer fell on his wife and children. The sun, which many aristocrats had claimed was too hot for white

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(7) Ibid., p. 167.

men to work under, was now not too unbearable for white women. They toiled long hours in the fields - planting, weeding and harvesting. Aching muscles, blistered hands, and sunburned skin were the results of the tedious labor - yet they persevered. Farm animals were at first a blessing to lighten the burden. These were stolen by guerrilla bands, appropriated by Union soldiers, or donated to a desperate Confederate Army as the war dragged on. Eyewitnesses tell us it was not unusual to see white women hitched to a plow while youngsters guided it. Little girls and boys stoically performed irksome chores. There was very little time for recreation. Their education was sadly neglected.

These people suffered dreadfully when exorbitant prices boosted necessities far beyond their reach. It was impossible for them to meet inflated prices demanded by unscrupulous profiteers. Flour sold at four hundred dollars a barrel, coffee forty dollars a pound, tea thirty dollars a pound, soap at eighty cents a bar. Other essentials enjoyed a similar range. Women turned to home manufacture of as many articles as possible. Old spinning-wheels and looms were brought into use to weave home-spun fabrics for soldiers, slaves, and family. Their zeal in practicing severe economy was

truly remarkable. In order to send all the food they could spare to the soldiers, these people practically starved.

Women of the "pineywoods" region had fishing, hunting, and trapping added to their numerous chores, when their men-folk went to war. Their frequent visits to the nearest plantations during the bitter winter months were mute testimony of their dire need. Loath to beg or appear too hard-pressed, they traded eggs, honey, or whatever they possibly could in exchange for the provisions they carried away. The Confederate Government distributed food in the towns on "Drawing Days" to give relief to the poor.(8) This benefited only those who lived within walking distance of town. The prolonging of the war intensified the suffering of this class until the old adage "survival of the fittest" became an acknowledged fact.

Factories sprang up in the South to meet the demand for munitions, shoes, and the like. With the majority of Southern men at the front, the urgency of the times forced the opening of remunerative occupations to women. War time put a premium on labor, and where such work was once considered degrading it was

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(8) Shields McIlwaine, The Southern Poor White from Lubberland to Tobacco Road, p. 79.

now urged upon them as a patriotic duty. They worked as well as, and more cheaply than men. Their value was quickly realized by their employers.

> "By 1864 women had come to be employed in the Government departments at Washington; the chief reason assigned was that they worked better and more cheaply [than men ]"(9)

The negro family, about whom the vortex of events whirled and eddied, suffered in a peculiar manner from the circumstance of war. The North was willing to risk lives to set them free. The South was prepared to die to keep them in bondage. Deep in their souls they yearned to be utterly independent, and accountable to no man for their actions. In their hearts they clung to the old familiar scenes and to their masters, whom they loved. Torn by emotion though they were, they preserved a calm exterior and patiently followed the even tenor of their way. Although in many instances the male authority which they feared and respected, was removed, it is to their everlasting credit that they took no advantage over the women left in charge. They cooperated to the fullest extent in giving them every possible aid. Soldiers at the front were fearful, at first, of the conduct of

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(9) Arthur W. Calhoun, Social History of the American Family, Vol. II, p. 361.

the slaves, who far outnumbered the white folks on the plantations. Their fears were entirely unfounded. Many of the family retainers were like trusty, faithful watchdogs who guarded their master's family and possessions with their very lives.

Negroes were excluded from combat, but many accompanied their owners to the battlefield to care for them, as Jake did with his young master.(10) He anxiously nursed him through a long illness. On the long trek home he foraged for food and obtained enough to keep them alive, although Heaven alone knows how he did it on the devastated lands through which they passed. Jed, loyal body-servant of Beauford Lyttleton was charged with the sad duty of transporting the body of his dead master from the field of battle to the family burial plot on the plantation.(11) It was finally accomplished although the difficulties seemed, at first, almost insurmountable.

There are other instances in which female slaves displayed no less courage and devotion. Staunch Mammies defied Unionists with remarkable daring. Should a rash Union soldier attempt to remove jewels

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(10) Laura Krey, And Tell of Time.

(11) Ibid.

by force from the white women of the plantation he first had to contend with an enraged black woman who held her charges inviolable. The vitriolic invectives she poured forth, along with her formidable bulk, usually kept any trespasser at a respectful distance.

While working to aid the South, there is no way of knowing how many were sincerely praying for the North to win. It is only natural to suppose that the great majority, in a passive way, desired it. Old Aunt Creasy, who was somewhat of a seer, predicted that the Lord would never let her die until she and all her race had been emancipated.(12) While she was by no means unhappy as a slave, this venerable old woman clung to her cherished dream until it became a reality.

The uncertainty of which side would be victorious undoubtedly operated as a check on the dissatisfied elements in the "Quarters." The discipline of their training made them wary of making a mis-step. When the final defeat of the South was foreshadowed, they seized the opportunity to steal away. Their owners were not perturbed too much, for the Emancipation Proclamation would become effective when the North emerged victorious. In the meanwhile they were a terrible drain

(12) T. S. Stribling, The Forge, p. 396.

on the sadly depleted resources of their erstwhile owners. Those who wandered off, frequently attached themselves as hangers-on to the Union Army. The attraction of a free hand-out was not to be denied. To win the sympathy of their liberators, they told whopping tales of the cruelties suffered at the hands of their masters. Gullible Yankees, not acquainted with the negro's propensity for stretching the truth, believed them.

Cities near the border of the Mason-Dixon line, and those easily accessible along the coast were the first to bear the fierce brunt of war. The din of battle, the moans of the dying, the procession of dead and wounded being carried behind the lines, was constant during the early years of the conflict. The tender hearts of women were torn with grief over the awful suffering. Every available woman was pressed into hospital service. The hideous wounds, the gruesome sights and the stench of gangrenous sores made them violently ill, but day after day they forced themselves to return to perform their Christian duty. As the blockade tightened its line, the lack of medical supplies caused untold agony. When chloroform and opiates gave out, amputations and other major

operations were performed without benefit of those merciful pain-killers. The make-shift hospitals near the field of battle were scenes of horror. The author of "Action at Aquila" gives a vivid description of the casualties which poured in after a brisk engagement. Mrs. Crittendon and her daughter Margaret hastened there with a basketful of home-made bandages. They offered their services to the two weary doctors who were themselves nearly overcome by their dreadful experiences. "Madam," said Doctor Wilson, "permit us to welcome angels of mercy to this demoniacal little dwelling."(13)

Deep in the heart of the South life went on as usual for some time. In those quiet retreats where no sound of warfare penetrated, it was hard, at first, to realize that the country was engaged in a grim struggle. As time progressed, it became manifest in the shortage of vital essentials. No people were ever so ill-prepared for war. Having made cotton - King - they were dependent on the North for manufactured articles, agricultural implements, and smallwares of all kinds. During the war they were faced, therefore, with food shortages and economic ruin.

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(13) Hervey Allen, Action at Aquila, p. 294.

Ingenious women rose to the occasion and after experimentation discovered substitutes for unobtainable products. War-time diaries are filled with tales of how such emergencies were met. The scarcity of salt, for example, led to drastic measures.(14) Sea water was boiled, or dirt beneath the floors of smokehouses, was dug up and washed to obtain even small amounts of this precious seasoner. A coffee substitute was made in a variety of ways. It was obtained by boiling parched wheat, rye, or even corn. In some localities sweet potatoes were cut small, dried in the sun, parched, ground up, and boiled. Okra seed was also used to make the popular beverage. Sorghum was used to sweeten foods when sugar became scarce. Tea was made from the leaf of any plant with a distinctive flavor such as blackberry or sassafras. From 1862 to Lee's surrender the Confederacy had no wheat, but women as smart as Aunt Lottie were not stumped for long.(15) When a very special occasion demanded such a delicacy as cake, she sifted ground cornmeal innumerable times through tightly meshed gauze. Corncobs

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(14) Matthew Page Andrews, The Women of the South in War Times, p. 21.

(15) Laura Krey, And Tell of Time, pp. 108-9.

furnished the successful yeast powder which was then allowed to ferment in the sun. Ashes of the invaluable corncob also supplied her with cooking soda.

The greatest versatility was displayed in the variety of recipes worked out for the making of soap and candles. Each housewife had her own recipe for supplying these essentials. When oils were no longer obtainable, they cast about for the best means of solving this problem. Thrifty housewives stored grease and fat in containers for this purpose. A woolen rag carefully deposited in the center of such a receptacle served as a wick for a crude candle. Sycamore balls saturated with grease made excellent tapers. Where they were available, myrtle berries, properly processed, made candles of superior quality. These were often sold or exchanged for other necessities. Grease tapers and pine lightwood knots were the best lighting substitutes most homes could afford.

The lack of ice, especially during the summer months caused illness and death from the despoliation of foods. Underground storage rooms were used to keep food as cool as possible. But these precautions were often not enough to offset the terrible heat. Yet little complaint was voiced except from hospitals

where it was so desperately needed. Little Virginia Larne succumbed to poisoning from contaminated milk.(16) Since Corrie May had bought up the ice supply for a grand party, the Larne child died for want of it. There is no record of how many lost their lives for need of this vital commodity.

Clever as they were in working out food substitutes the women excelled in improvising clothing and household necessities. Wearing apparel dwindled rapidly. One could not begin to recount the economy and diligence exerted to gain the best possible use of every piece of fabric. Women learned how to card, spin, and knit. Woven clothing was especially valuable in that it could be unravelled when worn out and re-woven into a new garment. In tribute to the homespun dress of the Southern girl, war verses were sung to the tune of "The Bonnie Blue Flag."

> Oh, yes, I am a Southern girl, and glory in the name;
> And boast it with far greater pride than glittering wealth or fame.
> I envy not the Northern girl, her robes of beauty rare,
> Tho' diamonds grace her snowy neck, and pearls bedeck her hair.

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(16) Gwen Bristow, The Handsome Road, p. 305.

Hurrah! Hurrah! for the Sunny South so dear!
Three cheers for the home-spun dress that
Southern ladies wear!(17)

Silks were often shredded, and carded with cotton to make a more durable cloth. Nettings which covered four-poster beds, were on occasion transformed into party dresses, and Cinderella-like resumed their prosaic places after the Ball.(18) Home-made dyes were employed to freshen the appearance of faded textiles. If women of the aristocracy appeared to be as well-dressed as ever, regardless of the war, there was a reason for it. Old trunks with rich fabrics and precious laces were ransacked for their priceless treasures. Coats and dresses of an earlier vintage were carefully taken apart and made into simpler, more practical costumes. The leaves of the palmetto, corn shucks, and many kinds of grasses were woven into bonnets for the ladies. Hats which became outmoded were speedily re-shaped and dyed another color.

Carefully trimmed thorns were used in place of pins. The button shortage was alleviated by drying

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(17) Matthew Page Andrews, The Women of the South in War Times, p. 28.

(18) Lancaster and Brentano, Bride of a Thousand Cedars, p. 27.

persimmon seeds and piercing them with holes to permit the passage of needle and thread. Gourds, cut to the desired size and covered with cloth, were also used. Needles were guarded zealously, for they were irreplacable. The loss of one became a major calamity.

Leather became so scarce that shoes became a major problem. Women learned to weave coarse slippers which could be used around the house to conserve their leather shoes. The less aristocratic classes went barefooted whenever weather permitted. The need for footwear was so great that,

> "The so-called 'decisive battle' of the war was brought on unexpectedly when barefooted Confederate soldiers learned that shoes might be had at Gettysburg. The search for shoes discovered Federal outposts, and the battle began there instead of at Cashtown as the Confederate commander had planned."(19)

Raids into Northern territory were often made to obtain such necessities.

> "From Chambersburg to York, Pennsylvania had been swept clean of hats and shoes and had not yet reshod itself. Many women's shoes had gone South too, for the Army of Northern Virginia had wives - even babies, it appeared."(20)

When the enemy began cutting a swath through the land to cut off strategic points, and to render communication and the transportation of supplies

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(19) Andrews, op. cit., p. 27 footnote.

(20) Hervey Allen, Action at Aquila, p. 71.

impossible, all the stricken areas became bitterly conscious of the exigencies of war. A chill of fear swept over the land with the news that the "Yankees" were coming. Overcoming their apprehensions, women of the plantations hastily gave orders to strip the house of its most valuable possessions. The precious silver and heirloom pieces were hidden with the greatest care and secrecy. It was done at night, if possible, and without the knowledge of any but the most trusted slaves. Too often had vindictive negroes curried favor with Yankee officers by revealing the hiding places of their owners' valuables. Abandoned wells, garden plots, and secret wine cellars were among the favorite places to store precious belongings. A house that was noticeably denuded aroused the ire of the coarser elements of the Northern Army, who tried to intimidate whites and blacks alike, to reveal their secrets. Failing in this, they were likely to ransack the house in search of booty. The wanton destruction of beautiful furnishings wrung the hearts of the helpless family. It sometimes acted as a stimulant which goaded ladies to lash out at their oppressors with flaming courage. Many Northerners could have told about torrid tongue-lashings they received from outraged

Southern ladies. A classic example has been preserved in the form of a scathing rebuke sent to General Hunter by Henrietta Lee when her home was destroyed by his order.(21)

Clever subterfuge often tricked the noisy rabble who desecrated the privacy of the home. Mary Boykin Chestnut relates this one.

> "Anne Sabb left a gold card-case, which was a terrible oversight, among the cards on the drawing room table. When the Yankee raiders saw it their eyes glistened. Godard whispered to her: "Let them have that gilt thing and slip away and hide the silver."
>
> "No!" shouted a Yank, "you don't fool me that way; here's your old brass thing; don't you stir; fork over that silver." And so they deposited the gold card-case in Godard's hands, and stole plated spoons and forks, which had been left out because they were plated."(22)

Women who chose to stay and face the enemy, showed an indomitable courage and serene poise which, more often than not earned the ungrudging admiration of their tormentors. The majority of the Unionists were decent men who were pained by this cruel warfare against women and children. They were obliged to obey the orders of their superiors who planned to shorten

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(21) Matthew Page Andrews, The Women of the South in War Times, pp. 201-4.

(22) Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary from Dixie, p. 389.

the war by breaking the morale of the Confederate troops. They hoped by widespread destruction of property to create unrest and fear in the Confederate lines for the safety of their loved ones. This accounts for the ruthless burning of so many ancestral homes. The less pretentious ones of poorer whites were not harmed. The negroes' cabins were, in many instances, carefully protected from damage.

The doomed manor was first stripped of its valuable ornaments. The occupants were then herded outside at a safe distance from the flames. Torches ignited the most inflammable furnishings. Picture the heartache of standing helplessly by while vandals deliberately destroyed the home which held so many hallowed memories! Demonstrative negroes wailed and moaned while their mistress, filled with a fierce anger and bitterness, would remain stoical.

Yankees used the Lacefield plantation manor as their headquarters.(23) On their final night there, they burned it. The colonel in charge lent the owners a supply of water buckets to enable the slaves to fight the fire, while Union soldiers stood idly by watching the flames and the feverish activity.

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(23) T. S. Stribling, The Forge, p. 398.

Negroes swarmed in and out of the manor carrying water to those stationed on roof and stairways. Although somewhat damaged, and destined to bear the scars of its ungrateful guests, the house was saved from the unkind fate of so many of its counterparts.

The dregs of the Federal Army, combined with lawless camp followers, enjoyed unbridled license during these scene of chaos. They created terror in the hearts of women who were now defenseless. Andrews relates the story of a raid on the Murchison mansion in North Carolina. Enraged at not securing greater treasure, they entered the room of a young girl in the last stages of typhoid fever. She was taken from the bed in which she lay, and died while the room was being searched for money and jewelry. When the officer in charge was appealed to, he is alleged to have said. "Go ahead, boys, do all the mischief you can."(24)

Such experiences caused spirited women to betray their loathing of Union soldiers. To punish the women of New Orleans for their insolence General Benjamin F. Butler issued his famous "Order No. 28," which earned for him the sobriquet, "Beast Butler."

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(24) Matthew Page Andrews, The Women of the South in War Times, p. 227.

This infamous document read as follows:

> "As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subjected to repeated insults from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans, in return for the most scrupulous non-interference and courtesy on our part, it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall by word, gesture, or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her vocation."(25)

Not one of his Army took advantage of this scurrilous order. On the other hand it shows how completely uncowered these Southern women were when their scornful contempt of the conquerors could evoke such a stinging reprisal.

The desolation of being homeless, penniless, and helpless was not the greatest cross these women had to bear. Their constant fears, for the safety of husbands, sons, brothers, and sweethearts, were icy fingers clutching at their hearts. The dread which overshadowed their lives was like the ceaseless din of battle in their ears. In her "Diary" Mrs. Chesnut relates the poignant tale of a woman who was informed her son had been killed.(26) While scarcely recovered from the first shock of grief, a messenger arrived to

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(25) Ibid, p. 165.

(26) Mary Boykin Chesnut, A Diary from Dixie, p. 178.

say there had been a mistake in the name. The poor mother fell to her knees and praised God's mercy. The entire household shared in her joy. In the midst of the jubilation, a hearse drove up with her son's body in a metallic coffin. Bewildered with grief, then joy, and grief again, was too much for her. She was stricken with brain fever and hovered between life and death. "Does anybody wonder so many women die? Grief and constant anxiety kill nearly as many women at home as men are killed on the battlefield."(27)

Added to this worry over their valiant fighting men was the immediate care of what to do to provide sustenance for their forlorn families. The plight of women with little children or elderly relatives to care for, was indeed pitiful when Union raids had scoured the countryside of everything available in the way of food - vegetable or animal. After many hardships some moved their families to less devastated areas. Ironically enough cabins in the "Quarters" were often the only place of shelter for the aristocrats of the manor. In some instances, food was so scarce that women gathered up scattered grains from troughs and storage bins and ground them into hominy.

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(27) Loc. cit., p. 178.

Proud patricians humbled themselves to pawn what ever valuables they had for food and other necessities. They realized how unequal the barter was, but they were in no position to quibble over injustice.

While the Confederate Government itself was reputedly free from graft or corruption there were unscrupulous individuals who were not averse to reaping tremendous profits at the expense of a suffering people. That not even medical supplies were exempt from inhuman profiteering is very well illustrated in "Bugles Blow No More."(28) While Philip Parramore was enjoying his illgotten gains by gambling and indulging his love for fine clothes, his fellow-countrymen were dying for want of the drugs which his mercenary greed denied them. He met a fate which should have been meted out to all his kind. Judy Kirby, learning of his treachery to the Confederacy, shot and killed him.

Blockade-running was a risky but highly profitable business. While ammunition and other necessities were smuggled through, there was always a goodly supply of luxuries aboard which were disposed of in record time regardless of the money involved. Trevor Wyeth, blockade runner extraordinary tried to explain this to

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(28) Clifford Dowdey, Bugles Blow No More.

Sally Cottrell.

> "You've no idea how depressing the Southern cities are these days. They're short of almost everything. I hate to think what it will be like next spring if things keep on going like this. People look thin now. They aren't having enough food or proper food. The girls are beginning to use all sorts of makeshifts for their clothes."
>
> "Makeshifts?" Sally looked puzzled. "But who buys all these folderols that you take over there?"
>
> Wyeth shook his head. "Most people are doing without - well nearly everything, for the sake of the army. But you'll find, as you do everywhere, a thin crust of selfish ones. They're the people who order wines and silks and laces and take up cargo space that might be used for other things. That is, they do if they have the money, which is growing very scarce. But enough seem to have it to take up all that we bring in the way of luxuries. I went into a hospital in Richmond. It was terrible. They needed - well, I can't tell you what they didn't need. And I can't tell you how many cases of champagne the Black Star unloaded last trip. The space would have kept a hospital going for months."(29)

It wasn't until the last year of the war that the blockade became impassable. Cut off from the world, faced with starvation and ruin, beaten, discouraged, and helpless, the tottering structure of the Confederacy collapsed, carrying with it the bright hopes of an independent government which would encourage and perpetuate the plantation system. Somewhere in the ruins was buried a civilization that was

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(29) Lancaster and Brentano, Bride of a Thousand Cedars, p. 216.

narrow in its confines, artificial in structure and selective in its culture.

What effect did the war have on Southern women? Almost without exception it deprived women of the aristocracy of the material comforts to which they had been accustomed. For the first time they really suffered want. The cavaliers who had served as buffers against the harsher side of life were swept into the maelstrom of war. Yet they met the challenge magnificently. They accepted new duties and responsibilities gladly, suffered hardships uncomplainingly, met emergencies calmly, were bulwarks of strength in times of stress. As their world crumbled at their feet, they emerged with a new-found sureness in their own ability. Necessity had driven them in four short years to fathom the depths of characters inherently strong, but suppressed for generations. Women of the poorer class, more familiar with poverty and suffering were, nevertheless, forced to endure even greater trials. With admirable fortitude they performed whatever service was required, from plowing the farm to making munitions. Patriotism caused them to pursue humbly tasks which earlier were despised because of their servile nature. The slaves, while bewildered by events, were by their very ignorance least affected by the war. Their men

were not allowed to fight. There was increasingly less work for many as the war progressed, and since they, as chattels, were merely dependents, they were released from care and responsibility. They had nothing to fear from the Yankees who had come to set them free.

The whirl of social events given impetus by the hysteria of war gradually changed from brilliant, elaborately planned events and exciting war weddings, to subdued gatherings where charades were played and the lightest of refreshments were served. The tradition for hospitality never wavered regardless of circumstances.

Education in the South practically ceased as the struggle for self-preservation began. Northern tutors were summarily dismissed, or voluntarily left the plantations. Private schools for girls remained open in some cases until invasion threatened. Public schools which boasted no girls among its youthful students turned culture aside to grapple with a more formidable adversary.

## CHAPTER III

## EFFECTS OF RECONSTRUCTION ON WOMEN

If Southern women were extraordinarily brave and capable during the Civil War were they not, perhaps, over-stimulated by their zeal for the Cause? Were they not conforming to the behavior pattern of women of all Ages when they exerted every effort to assist their men through a crisis? Was it not their duty to pursue the course they did? How did they react when bitter defeat wiped out their glorious sacrifices and left them in want and destitution? Did despair make them supine and helpless, or did they continue to bring new hope and purpose to the building of a completely different way of life? The answer can be determined only by an examination of the facts, an appraisal of their efforts, and an evaluation of their contributions to the New South. Novels, Diaries, and Histories will be used in an effort to present a true picture.

At the end of the war the ruin which had marked its progress was complete. Devastated areas, upon which not even a crow could find enough to sustain life, met the eye at every turn. Once splendid homes had been razed to the ground, or left badly battered as mute evidence of the cruelties of war. Bridges,

railroads and roads had been destroyed. Great areas devoid of farm animals and crops, resembled nothing so much as a desert. Human beings filled with bitterness and hate struggled with primitive conditions.

Scarcely a household in the South escaped bereavement. The flower of Southern youth had fallen in battle. One third of the men between the ages of sixteen and forty had given their lives to the Lost Cause. Those who survived the conflict were hardly to be envied. Armless, legless, or suffering from wounds which made them chronic or permanent invalids, they were liabilities in a Land already surfeited with misfortune. Even greater than their physical ailments was their utter loss of morale. They were overcome by the deepest gloom and despair. The atmosphere of want and depression engulfed them so completely that it was difficult to arouse them from their lethargy. The knowledge that the awful sacrifices had been in vain exacted a terrible toll in the feeling of spiritual abandonment.

Sick in body, mind, and spirit, they wearily wended their way home where they were greeted with tears of joy by loving wives, mothers, and children, who had suffered as much in their own way as the vanquished soldiers. Any women who longed to unburden

themselves on a stronger spirit were sadly disillusioned and thrown back upon their own resources. Scarlett O'Hara's wild flight from besieged Atlanta was sustained, through all its horrors, by the thought that when she reached home her troubles would vanish under her mother's soothing care. Cruel fate mocked her when she found gentle Ellen dead, Gerald, her father, to whom she next turned, living in a vague world of his own, and even capable Mammy waiting to unburden her "weary load" on the young Scarlett.

> "(...) all looking to her for strength, for guidance, all reading in her straight back courage she did not possess and strength which had long since failed."(1)

With devotion and patience these women fostered the spark of Hope which their men needed to give them renewed courage. Through the dark days after the war their own courage must often have faltered, but they maintained their Faith at all costs in an effort to impart some of it to their broken men.

Girls who had been betrothed before or during the war, married their crippled fiances and with laudable determination proceeded to build a new life. Some accepted and married men without a dollar. They lived in ruined mansions or crowded tenement houses in the

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(1) Margaret Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, p. 398.

towns, and took pride in making their "homes" as attractive and comfortable as scanty means would permit. A few found romance with Yankee soldiers and willingly accompanied their husbands to a section which but recently had been the object of their fervent hatred. For girls who had grown up during the war there were no eligible youths left to marry. Many of these, as well as the ones whose sweethearts failed to return, were doomed to lives of spinsterhood. They devoted themselves to aiding their poverty-stricken families, and to educating younger sisters and brothers.

Soldiers who returned to a plantation which, through some kind fortune, had been spared from the general havoc were indeed fortunate. Dennis Warden, whose warrior father had died defending the Confederacy, was amazed to the point of stupefaction to see his home and estate as untouched as if there had never been a war. His mother had done an admirable job of managing, alone. The youth recognized the irony of the situation.

> "He was master of Brook Haven and as ignorant as a swaddled baby. Sara would teach him skillfully always fostering the illusion of his male superiority; but war had stripped him bare of illusion and he knew that it would be months or even years before he could manage the place alone."(2)

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(2) Marian Sims, Beyond Surrender, p. 33.

The collapse of the plantation system required a new order to take its place. Plantation owners tried to sell part of their land but no one had money. The wage system might have been feasible but the owners had no credit or capital. Furthermore, the continuation of field work was not the negro's idea of freedom. They tried renting the land but the negroes had no sense of responsibility. The share-crop system proved the only successful way to meet existing conditions. The landlord furnished living quarters, tools, and seeds, and in return got a percentage of the crop. The tenant worked the land and took the remaining part of the crop as his share. The advantages of this system were counter-balanced by its evils; but economically speaking it put the South back on its feet again. An amusing insight into the negro's idea of this plan is found in "The Forge."

> "Robinet is a negro laborer on the plantation?"
> "Yes, suh, he wucks on de shares.
> "A share cropper?"
> "Yes, suh, dey 'vides what dey gits. Robinet takes de wuck and Mistah Polycarp takes de crop." (3)

A far greater percentage of veterans returned to homes that were partially or completely demolished. If they were fit to provide shelter, they were

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(3) T. S. Stribling, The Forge, p. 414.

undoubtedly monuments to the industry of family and slaves who had conquered, the fires set by Union troops. The homeless were taken in by kind friends or neighbors as the Ashley Wilkes' were, until some other arrangement could be made.(4)

Many who had lost everything severed all ties and fled from the region, loath to battle the chaos of a changing system when opportunities in the West beckoned them to reap the rewards of active enterprise. The section which once had been the stronghold of Southern society was left to negroes, poor whites, and women who had, of necessity, to remain where there was a roof to shelter them, and a land to provide their flock with food. The evacuation of the South by the more enterprising young men was an added blow to the stricken region. Only idle, unambitious, or crippled youths were left.

Women, reared in luxury, whose sacrifices and labors during the war were lightened by the realization that they were contributing toward the accomplishment of that end upon which all hearts were fixed, were now forced to face not temporary but permanent poverty. They were to suffer, without a sustaining motive or

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(4) Mitchell, op. cit.

ideal, still greater privations than they endured during the war. The country was prostrated and there seemed little hope of any future but one of abject poverty and wretchedness.

In 1865 the South was a land of widows and orphans pining in dire, hopeless poverty. Drought ruined what crops they tried to raise. Meat was an unattainable luxury. Small children cried pitifully for the food which desperate mothers humbled themselves to obtain. An actual observer said it was not uncommon to see women and children, who had never known want, begging for bread from door to door.(5) The Freedman's Bureau, established during the war to aid negroes, gave what assistance it could to the most destitute whites. The evident favoritism shown to negroes, and the lordly attitude affected by some of the Bureau officials, stung the pride of Southerners, many of whom vowed to starve rather than accept charity under such conditions.

The burden of managing both plantation and family, which many a lady had willingly assumed believing it to be a temporary arrangement, in many sad cases became a permanent one. Those who returned to

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(5) Walter L. Fleming, Documentary History of Reconstruction, Vol. I, p. 20.

the plantations were dismayed at the destruction. The cotton, stored for the time when peace would permit it to be exported, had in most cases made grand bonfires for the enemy. Given time enough they could raise new crops, but the most pressing need was to provide supplies to tide them over the emergency. An abundance of Confederate money was held by those whose faith in the Confederacy had been strongest, but these bills were now so useless that Scarlett O'Hara proposed to paper a room with them.(6) They were scathingly referred to as "shin-plasters." Very few had any "legal tender" from the United States Mint. Carpet-baggers streaming in from the North were quick to realize their golden opportunities. In exchange for a few paltry dollars they obtained valuable heirlooms. The aristocrats' small stocks of hidden treasure vanished rapidly as these mercenary individuals, gloating over their good fortune, drove pitiless bargains.

The supreme struggle with want and humiliation drove many women to strenuous exertion. Gone were the slaves who had once relieved them of all manual labor. It was not unusual to see Southern gentlewomen whose complexions had always been carefully shielded from

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(6) Mitchell, op. cit., p. 514.

the sun, plowing, planting, or cultivating crops in the blistering sun of a summer day. A Northern missionary told a Philadelphia audience in 1867 that in North Carolina he had seen a white mother hitch herself to a plow which her boy of eleven guided, while another child dropped seeds supplied by northern charity.(7) Undoubtedly the burden of the new era fell heaviest on women of the rural areas who were devoid of even the simplest comforts, and distracted by the chaos surrounding them.

For the first few years after the war the life of many Southern women beggars description; yet they valiantly met the challenge. The story is told of a gentle, shrinking Georgia woman who, at the time of surrender, was nearly four hundred miles from her luxurious home, from which she had fled when Sherman "marched to the sea."(8) She was uncertain of the fate of her husband who was with General Lee in Virginia. She hired a "darky" with his old army mule and wagon, loaded the latter with the remnants and chattels that were left to her, and placing her four children on top trudged the entire distance on foot, cheering, guiding,

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(7) Arthur W. Calhoun, A Social History of the American Family, Vol. III, p. 12

(8) J. L. Underwood, The Women of the Confederacy, p. 285.

and protecting the driver and her little ones on the tedious journey. Under a burning sun, along dusty roads she plodded - footsore and anxious until she reached her dismantled home and restored her little stock of earthly goods under their former shelter. When her soldier husband returned he found besides his noble wife and precious children, the nucleus of a new start in life glorified by woman's courage and fidelity under a most trying ordeal. For a year, deprived of even a decent pair of shoes, she toiled in kitchen, garden, and open fields without a complaint escaping her lips. This was not an exceptional case as the hardships of women in Georgia were extreme and prolonged.

The soldier's return was the signal for a celebration. Joy reigned supreme in every home when its master returned from the battlefield. After so much suffering and sadness they felt the need of a little gaiety and laughter. They needed no excitement or thrilling diversions such as had been paramount before war had drained them of artificialities and false emotions. They were grateful now for the quiet contentment of conversing with friends in a small but select gathering. No hardship or vexation was allowed to intrude upon the happiness of the occasion. The

festivities, if such they could be called, were very simple. Since it was understood that the hosts were unable to serve refreshments of any kind, these gatherings were known as "Starvation Parties." This title, however, often belied the facts. With a tradition of magnificent hospitality behind them, it would have been a barren home indeed, which could not supply some simple refreshment for its guests.

There might have been a pudding made of corn meal or a simple cake made of the same grain and sweetened with sorghum. Some of the secret wine cellars had escaped detection by Yankee soldiers. In such instances there was a plentiful supply of liquid refreshment. When dishes were lacking, gourds made excellent substitutes. No apologies were necessary; no embarrassment was felt by either hosts or guests.

If the guests were fortunate enough to have shoes which could withstand the strain - they might dance to the lively tunes played by negro fiddlers, while a black patriarch called off the sets. The music was enjoyable if dancing was out of the question. The pleasure of being among friends atoned for anything that was lacking. It was sufficient to know that peace reigned again, and they need never be separated from their families again.

Since everyone was poor with the exception of speculators who had become wealthy at the expense of women and children, poverty was essential if one wished to be of good repute. Only shameless women like Corrie May Upjohn,(9) and Emmie Slattery,(10) who consorted with thieving rascals of the new governments, could afford lavish clothes. The want of means became a jest which nobody mourned over. Yet they worked as hard as they could to repair their wasted fortunes. This was true in the matter of dress. Style and fashion were frivolities which belonged to the Past and which could be indulged again in the Future, perhaps, when some semblance of order and progress would help them toward a reasonable prosperity. Meanwhile, they wore whatever they happened to have. The nicety of dressing suitably to fit the occasion was no longer observed. Clothes were ignored and personalities held the spotlight.

Women became quite adept at making over old clothes. Cloth was turned to give it a fresher appearance. Drapes, spreads, or whatever good materials could be found in old trunks were used to

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(9) Gwen Bristow, The Handsome Road.

(10) Margaret Mitchell, Gone with the Wind.

concoct new costumes. When Lucinda Lyttleton was to be married, her relatives and neighbors gathered all their silks, laces and velvets.(11) They ripped, basted, and sewed, until she had enough clothing for a suitable trousseau. Her sister Margaret donated her shoes which had "only one little tiny hole in them." A beautiful brocaded coverlet made a handsome wedding gown. The groom was not quite so well outfitted, but friends contributed "an almost new uniform," and a fine pair of boots which were, however, to be returned to their owner after the honeymoon. Scarlett O'Hara had her mother's green velvet portieres made into the first new dress she owned since the Yankees vacated "Tara."(12) Lacking ostrich plumes for a velvet bonnet she was making to match Scarlett's gown, Melanie threatened to part the old rooster from his gorgeous, bronze, tail-feathers. But occasions which called for fine clothes were indeed exceptional. The struggle for existence was far too desperate.

Southern chivalry did not die in 1865. If possible, the courageous sacrifices made by women held

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(11) Laura Krey, And Tell of Time, pp. 104-6.

(12) Mitchell, op. cit., p. 545.

them up to greater esteem. But once having displayed their amazing capabilities they could never again pretend to be the dependent creatures whose propensity for swooning made them appear so helpless. How could they have been otherwise than delicate dressing as they did? Their high heels, long heavy skirts, crinoline, and diabolical corsets which constricted them unmercifully, were primarily responsible for the fragility of women of the Old South.

At least one good effect of the war was the sensible, more natural mode of dress adopted by women. The strenuous exertions demanded by the emergencies of war caused the hoop skirt to disappear, crinoline to vanish, and "stays" to be considerably loosened. The scarcity of cloth led to simplicity in the style of garments, and the increased outdoor life made long, sweeping skirts impractical and ridiculous. The newer mode was simpler and more practical, adopted to meet the demand of a more rigorous life.

Domestic difficulties presented a vexing problem to housekeepers in the rural areas. Their former help, with the exception of the most loyal ones, had gone their separate ways. The few who were left were unable to cope with emergencies without the guidance of their mistress. It fell to her lot to work side by

side with them in kitchen and field, instructing, directing, and encouraging them. The lack of kitchen utensils and tools doubled the hardship of even the simplest kind of work. When young negresses could, finally, be persuaded to return to work as freedmen, they were far from satisfactory. They were apt to be irresponsible, unstable, and insolent. The housewives of the New South were beginning to appreciate the "servant problem" alluded to by their Northern sisters.

The corrupt governments headed by scheming politicians and adventurers from the North, as well as scalawags from the South, took advantage of the fact that the majority of Southern whites had been excluded from voting as punishment for their part in the rebellion. They took up temporary residence in the South in order that they might control the negro vote and be elected to office. The state governments administered under such conditions were of the worst sort imaginable. Enormous taxes were levied on a hard-pressed populace, and the money was frequently spent in speculation and extravagance, leaving the states burdened with debt.

The assessments levied upon the estates which had been wealthy were so immense that poverty-stricken owners were often compelled to forfeit their lands. Speculators bought them for a fraction of their value

or they were sold at auction to shrewd rogues who may have been instrumental in boosting the taxes so that the owner would lose control of a coveted piece of property. An excellent example of this vindictive policy is displayed in "Gone With The Wind."(13) After collecting the taxes for the year, a second assessment was demanded because a prospective buyer had put in his bid to purchase it at the Sheriff's Sale. But they reckoned without the will and determination of Miss Scarlett O'Hara!

Ann Larne, more long-suffering that the impetuous Scarlett, had, by stringent economy, raised the tax money.(14) Fearing to trust anyone with so important a mission, she made the long trip to town on the last day allowed for payment. There she was subjected to humiliating treatment by a gloating official who, as her father's former overseer, had been dismissed because of his insolence to her. When he counted the money he claimed it was ten dollars short of the required amount. His revenge would have been complete but for the intervention of Corrie May Upjohn.

The activity of the New South centered in and around the towns. Penniless folk of all classes flocked

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(13) Margaret Mitchell, Gone with the Wind, p. 520.

(14) Gwen Bristow, The Handsome Road, p. 545.

there in the hope of obtaining work.

Two avenues were open to women of the more cultured class. Teaching was considered "respectable" when self-support was necessary. Shopkeepers and tradesmen who were now the "nouveau-riche" class were anxious to give their children the advantages of an education and culture formerly denied them. Sharon Myles left a hopelessly entangled plantation to move to an upper-story tenement in the nearest town where she taught music to small children.(15) She was so successful that in a short time she rented a rather fine old house in town as a finishing school for girls.

The influx of strangers to the town was a boon to impoverished families whose ancestral homes, situated in or near the scenes of activity were not too badly damaged to permit taking in "paying guests." Ladies used to having their wishes anticipated, found their positions reversed when they were compelled to cater to individuals whom, in ante-bellum times, they would have ignored. Fancy needlework was resorted to by a few who were skilled in the art. Their work was sold in the shops but few with artistic tastes could afford to purchase them, and the untutored preferred more gaudy articles.

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(15) Marian Sims, Beyond Surrender, p. 84.

Young girls of the patrician class, growing up during this chaotic period, were overworked and underprivileged. There was no longer the possibility of being sent to boarding school or college. They received what little educational training they could from mothers or older sisters. The exhausting nature of their daily tasks left little time for leisurely learning. Their practical experience and knowledge made them more capable to deal with real situations than did the more aesthetic training of their mothers. The value of an educational background was more apparent than ever, now that girls were dependent on their own resources for self-support.

These people would not send their children to the public schools for various reasons. The schools were established in or near towns which precluded any possibility of attendance by those in the rural areas. The school districts were five miles square, muddy miles in winter, blazing hot in summer. It took time for the opposition to public schools to subside. The aristocrat preferred ignorance, if necessary, rather than to allow his children, especially the girls to mingle with "poor white trash." Moreover, prowling negroes made lonely roads unsafe.

When more stable governments were established, and a reasonable degree of prosperity could be guaranteed, great sacrifices were made to send girls to be trained along lines which would make them self-reliant and independent. School-teaching was the least objectionable and most dignified profession for women. It served as an opening wedge which was to lead to greater economic opportunity for women while it gradually obliterated the prejuidice and stigma attached to self support.

Among elderly members of the family there was a tendency to cling tenaciously to the old traditions and ideals. This may have been a symptom of senility, but more often it was an escape from the cruel realities of the time. Such incidents might have been amusing but for the tragic evidences of a retreat from reality. Fragile Mrs. Long, unable to face a world so changed from what she had always known, retired to the privacy of her room as a semi-invalid.(16) When visitors called at the ruined manor they were "announced" as in former days regardless of the lack of servants. She insisted on dressing for dinner and continuing all the customs of a South which had vanished forever. Her

(16) Marian Sims, Beyond Surrender, p. 41.

refusal to adjust herself to the changing scene simply added another burden to be borne by her patient daughter. Even crusty old gentlemen sometimes refused to face the inevitable. When Thomas Dabney heard that General Sherman had said that he would like to bring every Southern woman to the washtub, that worthy one proclaimed that his daughters should never stand over a tub if he had to do the washing himself. And although he was seventy at the time, he continued this self-imposed task for two years.(17)

Social standards ordinarily take a long time to change, but necessity can often ameliorate circumstances. While self-support by women was still deplored, it was recognized as a necessary evil. Men did not respect them the less, but pitied them the more that such a course of action was required. The tradition of chaperonage, too, was doomed. It had been a pretty pretense when girls had been sheltered like nuns. For those who had lived through the realities of war, it was absurd. They had proved their ability to take care of themselves, and had earned the right to independence.

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(17) Walter L. Fleming, Documentary History of Reconstruction, Vol. I, p. 14.

The effects of Reconstruction on the poorer class of whites were as varied as the multitude of types included in this classification. The more prosperous ones suffered loss of property and slaves, and were as destitute in 1865 as the better class. But for those people who, by their economy, shrewdness, or good fortune were ready to step out on the road to prosperity, the war brought a great era of emancipation. A great multitude of this class came forward as the buyers and owners of better lands than they had ever been able to obtain under the old order. This was made possible by the emigration of many of the owners of rich lands to western regions, when taxes and foreclosures robbed them of their property. By working the land themselves, these families were better situated than those who employed labor. They prospered faster than the owner who engaged in share-cropping and whose profits depended on shiftless, unreliable farmers.

Such changes were gradual and farmers in the South, as elsewhere, suffered drought and insect scourges which offset the years when good fortune smiled. The increase of small farms was a healthy sign of better equalization of opportunity than was possible in earlier times. The knowledge that they

were compensated in proportion to their industry encouraged them to greater efforts. Women eagerly stimulated the spirit of enterprise and gave what assistance they could in field and home to bring about greater success. By their energy and example they added materially to their resources.

People of the mountain regions were aroused from their lethargy by the Civil War. They became conscious of a world which had been almost unknown in their mountain fastnesses. As the men marched with Confederate troops they received the first cheers that had ever thrilled them. The women, too, came down from the seclusion of their homes to visit their men in camp and hospital. They regarded the activity of towns and cities with amazement. They, in turn, became sources of great interest to their countrymen. Their wretched lives aroused the sympathy of philanthropists who became aware of their plight through the writings of travelers and educators who toured the South during the years after the war.

The women and children of the poorest class sank to new levels of misery and depravity, when their men failed to return from the war. Officials of the Freedman's Bureau to whom they applied for help, told queer stories of the appearance and action of some of these

strange creatures. Barefooted, and clad in a single, ragged garment held together with rope or something as crude, they straggled in to Bureau headquarters in search of government relief. Many became women of easy virtue who followed garrisons about from place to place. They would not work. Indeed no one would hire these "low-down people" because they did not know how to work. They were wild, quarrelsome creatures with a fierce pride and an appalling dread of becoming public charges. McIlwaine says that they would beg from door to door, winter in a hut of pine boughs and stoop to thievery rather than sleep under a roof of charity.(18)

"Crackers" who went to work in factories during the war continued to do so in the period of expansion which industry enjoyed at the cessation of hostilities. They and their malnourished children were exploited by mill owners who worked them long hours for pitifully small wages. In the period of recovery from prostration, child labor was natural enough. The poverty of the South for many years following the war made it necessary for almost every member of the family to work, to piece out a frugal existence. It was no paradox to find puny, underprivileged children toiling long

(18) Shields McIlwaine, The Southern Poor White from Lubberland to Tobacco Road, p. 86.

hours in mills while negro children were being educated and watched over by Northern benevolence.

Squalid huts began to appear on the outskirts of towns, and slum conditions prevailed. With the growth of mills the lives of the workers were controlled by mill-owners. A new kind of feudalism was imposed. The poor sandhillers became politically enslaved to their new masters, but they seemed not to resent it. Compared with what they had before the war, they considered themselves fortunate. The houses they lived in were far better than those they had in the hills. They received cash for their services and credit was given to them at the company store. Then, too, they enjoyed the social life and celebrations on the few holidays given them.

The mills had a deadening effect on the physical and mental health of its workers, but the very fact that it brought people down from the barren hills into the circle of community life with its possibility of enlightenment, was an encouraging sign. They became more industrious because they were better compensated than ever before. Finally, they were at least exposed to culture and a more refining influence than any they had ever known.

Men of shrewd business ability who had found it difficult to prosper under the old regime, enjoyed an unprecedented run of good luck during the War and Reconstruction Period. They were in a position to dictate, and many took full advantage of the opportunity to make money, regardless of the victim. J. Handback, rascally supply merchant, took advantage of struggling poor-whites like Gibeon Dalrymple.(19) The latter produced four bales of cotton one year and eight the next, yet both times he just broke even according to Handback's ledger. The astute Mr. Helm was not averse to making an excellent profit at the expense of his own son-in-law.(20) These merchants had the whip-hand, and gave no quarter to any victim, especially the former upper-class. Where formerly they had stood in awe of the rich planters, the situation was now reversed. Their former patrons were reduced to pleading for credit. As security, the merchant might get the deed to a choice plot of land or whatever else he coveted. Many an ancestral home changed hands in such a manner.

The wives and daughters of the merchants found themselves in an enviable position. The old aristocracy

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(19) T. S. Stribling, The Store.

(20) Marian Sims, Beyond Surrender.

with its flaunted society had vanished with the downfall of the plantations. In its place arose a new social order. Since money, not culture, was power, the new society was somewhat brash and crude. They attempted to make an impression by spending money lavishly. The conservative taste and decorum of the old leaders were too quiet for them. New houses bristling with up-to-date gadgets and the most modern improvements, rose beside mellowed old homes of an earlier period. Costly bric-a-brac and massive furniture vied for importance in the garish rooms. A fascinating description of such a house may be found in "Beyond Surrender."(21)

Daughters of the merchant class enjoyed privileges beyond their fondest dreams. It was they, who were now able to import the finest dresses and bonnets. They were resplendent in their new plumage. The belles of yesteryear looked shabby in comparison. "They wore rags with an air of gallant unconcern, but still, they wore rags."(22) Since fine feathers made fine birds, they attracted males who were weary of somberness and poverty. Their highest ambition was to marry an aristocrat. In the New South the family name, tradition, and

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(21) Ibid., pp. 285-86.

(22) Ibid., p. 61.

background played an important part, much the same as in the Old South. It was considered preferable to marry into a family of quality whose material circumstances had been reduced, rather than wed one who was rich but of common stock. Even today, to belong to a notable family is still a rich asset in the South.

Denis Warden, master of Brook Haven, reflecting that "War had singed the women of his acquaintance; had left them with a core of suffering beneath their laughter,"(23) married flighty, but pretty Dolly Helm, daughter of his creditor. She was far below him as measured by the social scale of former days, and while he lived to regret his action, he was infatuated by her gaiety and physical charm.

It pleased the creditor class to give their children educational advantages which had been impossible in pre-war times. The girls were sent to private schools where they were trained in the social graces as well as in the arts, and academic subjects. Their teachers were ladies of respected families who were glad to earn a livelihood by accepting the patronage of their former tradesmen.

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(23) Sims, loc. cit., p. 61.

The whites of upper and lower classes were united in their efforts to keep the white race dominant in the South. The fear of negro insurrections caused considerable apprehension. The colored race largely outnumbered the white population. The negroes, through the work of such organizations as the Union League, had been given an exaggerated idea of their own importance. Members of such groups fostered bad blood between the two races, for their own personal aggrandizement. Poor whites hated the slaves before the war, but afterward lived in dread of having the social equality of the negro thrust upon them. This fear increased their bitterness and distrust of the "darkies" and sought release in acts of brutality and violence.

The poor white joined the upper class, if he was allowed, in the Ku Klux Klan. He had more work to do under the white hood than anyone else. Those refused admittance to the large organization, formed Klans of their own. It was an excellent chance to wreak vengeance upon "niggers" who had reviled them. They "fired" school houses run by Northern missionaries for the negroes. Denied education themselves, they were determined not to let the "darkies" enjoy such advantages. Churches and homes were destroyed to terrify the negro populace, and keep them submissive. It was

undoubtedly the actions of smaller Klans such as these, which assisted in discrediting the larger organization.

One of the reasons for establishing the Klan, was the protection of women. The lawless elements prevalent in the South during Reconstruction struck terror to the hearts of all citizens. Crimes and outrages increased. Weak government officials were powerless. Southern men, therefore, took matters in their own hands. In some sections it was not safe for a white woman to step outside her own door without some protection. Women of the poorer classes who carried dairy products to town to sell were afraid to go by themselves. For mutual protection they arranged to go in large groups.(24)

This fear of the negro, and the jealousy of the benificence bestowed upon the black race by Northern societies, deepened racial intolerance. Negro children were sent to school by charitable organizations of the North while white children were cruelly neglected. Illiterate children were plentiful in rural areas during the Seventies, due to the restrictions suffered as a result of the War and Reconstruction. Their aversion to accepting "charity" in the guise of public

(24) Walter L. Fleming, Documentary History of Reconstruction, Vol. II, p. 333.

school education was one reason. Avary explains another.

> "A cause operating against education of both races remains to be cited. The carpet-bag, scalawag and negroid State Governments made raids on educational funds. (...)war had left a school fund, taxation increased it; but for two years no child white or black received its benefits."(25)

Public schools established after 1870 gradually improved. The education of daughters of the family yielded splendid results. It raised not only economic, but the cultural standards of the community. Poor girls, especially, have benefitted by the granting of a privilege so long denied them.

Emancipation, bursting as it did upon the negro's horizon, left him dazed and bewildered. It was almost impossible for some of them to realize that they could leave the plantation of their own volition, without being brought back by force, and punished for what had always been donsidered a most serious offense. The more daring ones, rather timidly to be sure, tested the validity of the rumor by quitting the plantation. When no one questioned the escapade, they boldly came and went as they pleased. While some were glad to shake the dust of bondage forever from their feet, others, penitent and crestfallen, returned to their old masters after a taste

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(25) Myrta Lockett Avary, Dixie After the War, p. 307.

of freedom. Uncle Peter expressed it thus.

> "Free! Dat word kep ringin' in my min' lak a tinklin' bell an' a soundin' trumpet. I had to see whut it was lak to be a free man in dis wurl. I had to fin' out." His voice sank. "I foun' out," he said, "an' 'twarn't sweet. 'Twar misery an pain. Eff'n yo' wants me, I'll serve you twell I die."(26)

Negro women were less anxious to taste the fruits of victory than their men-folk. Although they were delighted to be free, they did not exult over their masters but genuinely sympathized with them in their ruin. The household chores were performed as usual, the children were tended as zealously as ever, but both parties understood perfectly that the service was entirely voluntary. The loyal old slaves who had been with the family for a generation or more were too attached to their "folks" to desert them now in their misery. Besides, they were too old to begin a new life among strangers in unfamiliar surroundings. They knew they would be taken care of in their old age if their former masters ever regained their lost prosperity. Pork and Mammy were true representatives of this type, who suffered through all hardships with their owners.(27) They were ordered about as in the old days, but it was so natural they never questioned it.

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(26) Laura Krey, And Tell of Time, p. 82.

(27) Margaret Mitchell, Gone With the Wind.

In some instances, those newly freed gave the "Missus" to understand that they expected payment in silver or gold for their services. Intoxicated by their new liberty, many young negresses flitted about, sipping the cup of freedom and by their very giddiness failed to enjoy its satisfaction. The pitfall of unchastity lured them to perdition. Handsome wenches like Gracie(28) and Phyllis(29) became quite important as the mistresses of men of the ruling white class during Reconstruction.

Housekeepers of the New South were faced with a most distracting servant problem. The negro's idea of freedom was total abstinence from labor. The few who might be persuaded to return to household tasks were aware of the favor they were bestowing, and were correspondingly hard to manage. The mistress frequently had to do the sweeping, dusting, or cooking herself. Money could not entice some overjoyed negresses to part with the leisure which was their conception of emancipation. The situation was so bad, with only a few to do the work formerly attended to by scores, that even temporary or inexperienced help was a boon. Drusilla Crowninshield

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(28) T. S. Stribling, The Forge.

(29) Francis Griswold, A Sea Island Lady.

hired fifteen year old Pammy Lee for fifty cents a week, with the understanding that when, under Drusilla's tutelage she learned how to cook, she would hire out to some other housewife who could afford to pay more.(30)

It is alleged that agents of the "Bureau" informed the negresses concerning their rights and privileges. They advised them not to continue their work as servants for the white women who should now learn the meaning of labor. The idea that their husbands should support them as white men supported their wives caused many of them to actually quit their employment. Those who could not take such drastic action became rather fractious and refused to do certain menial tasks, informing the "Missus" to blacken the boots or milk the cow herself. There was, however, a decided tendency toward relieving negro women of field work and giving them lighter employment.

In the two years immediately following the war, when the governments set up by President Johnson were operating rather well, the Southern answer to the problem of what to do with the freedmen was solved by the enactment of the so-called "Black Laws."(31) These were

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(30) Stribling, op. cit., p. 85.

(31) Walter L. Fleming, The Sequel of Appomatox, p. 97.

remarkably fair. Blacks were to be permitted the same legal rights as whites, but restricted by the principles of political and social inferiority. Southern whites knew how to handle negroes, but, unfortunately the "Black Laws" were never enforced but were suspended from the beginning by the Freedman's Bureau and the Army. Radicals in the North cleverly seized them as proof that the Southern whites were prepared to persecute and subjugate their recent slaves.

In order to safeguard the civil rights of the freedmen, the Bureau was given authority to set up courts of its own, where they displayed, time and again, their partiality and preference for the negro. Vindictive black men could have white men dragged before the Court upon frivolous complaints. The victims were ridiculed, abused, lectured, fined, or imprisoned.

The North was, in great part responsible for the demoralization of the negro. They overwhelmed them with adulation and promises. The whites were branded as traitorous enemies and rebels of the Government, who were permitted to live only by the magnanimity of the North. Lauded in press and pulpit as innocent victims of the white man's cruelty, the negroes were hailed as "wards of the nation." Every convenience was placed at their disposal during the period of Black Recon-

struction. The Freedman's Bank and Bureau were established primarily for their benefit. Offices in the newly formed government, endowments and bounties were lavishly promised to them. Force Bills were passed to secure their triumph over the whites. They were the pets and heroes of the North. The simple, gullible nature of the negroes made it easy to turn their poor ignorant heads. It did irreparable damage to their moral natures and to their future status among citizens of the South.

They were so pampered with free rations supplied by the Bureau and other agencies, that the towns fairly swarmed with indolent blacks. Sonorous-voiced politicians extolled their virtues. Through some misunderstanding, negroes believed the Government would give each man "forty acres and a mule." Such propaganda raised false hopes. The dream of social equality with the whites, was now changed until they felt they were the superior race. They became insolent and overbearing in their conduct toward the white man. The more obstreperous ones delighted in goading aristocrats whom they disliked, into lashing out at them, so that they might, through due process of law, enjoy retaliation. White women whose faith in black slaves during the awful days of war had been justified, now lived in terror of

them.

An aggressive attitude was taken by many negroes. Radical whites had preached that their former masters were scheming to enslave them again, economically. To show their hostility, negroes jostled or edged white folks off the sidewalks or forced them to detour around them. Hot-tempered Denis Warden refused to allow a former slave to humiliate him.(32) Jed Farris drilling his regiment of black troops ignored the Warden carriage waiting in the road, and the request that it be allowed to pass. Denis, obstinate to the pleas of his mother and wife to avoid trouble, grasped the carriage whip and jumped down to teach the cocky leader a lesson. Happily for all concerned, the negro chose that moment to disperse his company.

Colored families who became "share-croppers" were mostly unsuccessful, chiefly because of their inefficiency and unwillingness to work. They borrowed on the next year's crop, went to town frequently when they should have been working, and were generally imcompetent. Their constant indebtedness lowered their standard of living to a new low which was nearly beyond description. Their squalid huts were barren and unhealthy. Their raiment was coarse and scanty. They became subject to ills

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(32) Marian Sims, Beyond Surrender, p. 450.

which had never troubled them on the plantations. There was lawlessness among the new generation who no longer had "old massa and old missus" to control them. The children were unhappy antitheses of the well-fed plantation pickaninnies.

Irresponsible negroes deserted their families, and roamed the countryside indulging their inherent vices - indolence, theft, and sensuality. The greatest drawback to men and women of the Black Race has been their immorality. Even religion has not been entirely effective in combatting the evil. Progress was slow , but those who really did "get religion," settled down in many cases to a normal, wholesome family life.

The more discerning ones began to realize that their former owners were, after all, their best friends. The latter understood the negro and were bitter toward the avaricious whites who set the blacks on the downward path. There was no animosity felt by either race where long years of association had built up a mutual feeling of love and kinship.

Religious revivals played an important part in the life and recreation of the negro after the war. Rumor would spread when an itinerant preacher was in the vicinity that there was to be a "shouting" that night. They would sing, shout, join hands and circle around,

dancing and jumping until one of the circle would faint. The insensible one was considered to have "got religion." These frenzies delighted them.

Perhaps the one way in which the negro was made fully cognizant of his changed status was his opportunity to attend school. Hoary age and tender youth sat in the same schoolroom. Confiscated homes, former hospitals, and other available buildings were converted into schoolhouses. Northern teachers white and black were sent to instruct them. Emily Fenwick learned many lessons herself while teaching one of these classes.(33) The old ones were anxious to learn how to read so that they might peruse the Bible. The attendance was not constant, and there were many difficulties. Poor whites, jealous of the privileges given the negroes, refused to attend such schools. They accused the teachers of spreading Northern propaganda, and fostering ill-feeling between the two races. The Ku Klux Klan often burned their schoolhouses. Opposition increased during Reconstruction, and Northern teachers, disheartened, returned home. Negroes, too, lost their first enthusiasm. The subject matter taught was on a plane

(33) Francis Griswold, A Sea Island Lady.

calculated for a higher degree of civilization. Nevertheless they made enormous gains. There was a great decline in negro illiteracy at the end of Reconstruction. The most hopeful outcome for the future was the development of the Hampton-Tuskegee plan for the training of negro teachers during this period.

The alteration in the status of women was one of the most outstanding signs of transformation in the New South. A Southern woman, before the war had no opportunity for a career outside the home, no chance for economic independence, for self-support. She was bound by a genteel tradition which curbed her ambitions and stifled her individuality. War forced her out of her sheltered existence to an active participation in a rapidly changing world. The spirit of determination and courage which carried her through the war was maintained and strengthened during the trying period which followed. She cheered and encouraged, and by her example inspired the building of a new life. Her achievements seemed boundless, and any prosperity her family enjoyed was due, largely, to her efforts. Greater outdoor activity and more sensible dress gave her better health. The timidity which characterized her before the war was replaced by a sense of sureness in her own ability.

The poorer white woman, in the main, paralleled the experiences of the upper class during the War and Reconstruction. In some instances her lot was greatly improved when better farm-land was acquired. She entered industry and laid the foundation for the advancement of the rights of women. Then, too, educational facilities were available although many did not take advantage of them immediately. The better equalization of opportunity was a distinct advantage to a class which had always been downtrodden.

The black race seemed to be the losers in a conflict waged for their benefit. Emancipation brought them misery and woe. They were unprepared for freedom. Their degradation was swift and tragic. But at least they had gained liberty! The will to use or abuse it was solely in their own hands and not those of a master. The educational system laid during this era gained momentum in later years. Some of the illiteracy had been wiped out by 1877. The opportunity to advance and succeed was a matter for the individual to decide. The seed was sown. The harvest was in the lap of the gods.

## RÉSUMÉ OF NOVELS PERTAINING TO THE PERIOD

In the tumultuous post-war years the American Scene was one of bustling activity - confused and turbulent, but not without fascination. The South was an unwilling victim of an industrialism which engulfed their agrarianism. The aristocrats still clung to the romance of the past. The aroma of the old sentimentalism still lingered. Writers continued the romantic note dominant in earlier literature. The Civil War produced only one book of realistic criticism "The Recollections of a Private" by Warren Goss, but Americans were not yet ready for caustic debunking, and it enjoyed no popularity.

A brilliant group of literary writers in the mid-eighties created a revival of interest in the New South. Southern literature became a kind of craze under the influence of T. N. Page, J. C. Harris and Mary Murfree. Their most notable contribution was the glorifying of the Old South.

Southern writers had done this before the war, but in a spirit of bitterness and defiance. The Revivalists strove to portray the lovable, admirable qualities of the region and its people. These "local colorists" chose the aristocrat as the most picturesque subject for their talents. The poor-white with his

drabness and ignorant manners would certainly repel rather than attract those who manifested their interest.

In the present century there began to develop in fiction, a critical and sometimes propagandist treatment of the white classes in the South. T. S. Stribling in his famous trilogy typifies this attitude of criticism in his treatment of characters like Alex Cady and J. Handback. He emphasizes the importance of economic background. Because he is a humanitarian as well as a careful documentor, he attempts to portray the evil as well as the good in his characters. The documentary and factual method used by some modern writers has led to a logical and systematic portrayal of events. "Bugles Blow No More" by Clifford Dowdey, "And Tell of Time" by Laura Krey to mention but two, are accurate chronicles, one of the War, the other of Reconstruction, with romance interwoven.

A sympathetic picture of the poor white woman is drawn by Bristow in "The Handsome Road." A clever exposition places the burden of responsibility for the misery of this class upon the aristocrats who encouraged the exploitation of these poor creatures. Marian Sims depicts the Uriah Heep of the poor whites in the character of Mr. Helm, in "Beyond Surrender." The uncomfortable pretensions and crudities of a "nouveau-riche"

family are particularly striking as contrasted with the genteel tradition of the Warden's background, when the two families are united by marriage.

Perhaps no novel dealing with the Southern aristocracy has been so brutally frank yet so grippingly tender in its portrayal as Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With the Wind." The trend toward realism and sensibility reaches a climax here. Excellent character delineations and stage settings recreate the charm and splendor of life before the war. The stark realism which descended upon the O'Hara family with the advent of War and Reconstruction, stripped the veneer of culture from its favorite daughter and revealed the primitive instincts which generations of soft living had not been sufficient to suppress. The glamour of the old days hangs like a wraith in many of these novels, but the realities of a highly complex civilization demands commonsense, practical treatment of subject matter, plot, and characters.

The heroines of these latter day novels are quite different from the delicate, lavender-scented ladies of the earlier romantic fiction. They should be! The sordid, brutal elements of reality have challenged them to fight or perish. If in the battle they lost some of their glitter, be assured they have gained more human warmth

and genuine depth of emotion than was possible in the artificial society of the pre-war South.

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

Writers of modern American fiction have presented the heroines of stories of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era in the South, in a different light than authors dealing with belles of the ante-bellum period. The change in viewpoint has been due, not so much to the introspective qualities of the authors, as to the revolutionary transformation in women themselves, caused by their experiences in the tremendous upheaval. To fully appreciate the potency of the changes, an over-all survey of the section and its people in relation to their background, is necessary. The span of time between 1860 and 1877 shows the most effective contrasts.

The plan of this paper is to deal with the three prevailing classes of women, aristocrat, poor white, and negress. The subject is organized to present the three successive stages in the drama: first, the status of women under the Old Régime; second the terrible experiences they suffered during the Civil War, and finally, the readjustments demanded of women by a complete revolution in the social and economic life of the region. Each section closes with a summary of the particular period covered. The first part discusses the characteristics of each class of women, placing emphasis

on the domestic, recreational, and educational facilities available to each. The second portion reveals the behavior of the three types in response to the stimuli of war. Their devotion, courage, and ingenuity under stress have been disclosed. The third part portrays the final destruction of the Old South with its consequent effect on women. The leveling of the upper class, the rise of the middle group, and the temporary elevation of the black race present an interesting panorama. By way of conclusion, a thumb-nail sketch of literary trends which have affected the portrayal of women of the designated period, is briefly presented.

The institution of slavery colored everything it touched. The economic structure of the Old South was built on it. Wealthy planters acquired more and more slaves, and prospered accordingly. Poor farmers unable to maintain chattels, were compelled to compete with rich planters in a system that was grossly unjust and unbalanced. Such competition denied the middle group opportunities for equal rights and privileges. As the gap widened between the two white classes, there was built up, gradually, a distinct caste system with the aristocrat at the top and the slave at the bottom. The poor whites were higher in the social scale than the negroes, because of their color, but they were actually more neglected and

destitute, in many cases. The negroes, while objects of pity to the North, were, by far, the most carefree of the three groups.

They were burdens to their mistresses who were charged with the responsibility of their welfare. Yet, the patricians firmly believed that only in slavery could a Christian influence be exerted on them, while they in turn lessened the labor of their owners and brought them prosperity. The leisure gained by the aristocrats was devoted to acquiring a rich culture, and to the enjoyment of social functions. Women indulged in lavish self-adornment and abhorred self-support of any kind. The slaves, denied education, nevertheless acquired by imitation many of the refined mannerisms and elegant phrases of their betters. Realizing their many advantages over the poor whites, they slyly ridiculed them, and provoked ill-feeling. The former envied the slaves' material comforts, yet despised them for their smugness.

Women performed men's work during the Civil War. The shock awakened them from their ladylike futility. They left their homes to work in field, factories, and hospitals. They inspired greater heroism and devotion to the Confederate Cause. The urge for survival drove them to unprecedented physical and mental exertions. Their whole-hearted support is alleged to have prolonged

the conflict. They cheerfully accepted irksome tasks, and cleverly improvised substitutes for scarce commodities. Their Spartan conduct during the invasion of the Federal Army, evoked the admiration of the Unionists. The poor whites aligned themselves with the rich planters and worked fervently for victory. They feared a defeat which would free the slaves and place negroes on their social level. Under the guise of patriotism they gladly entered the field of industry which women had scorned. The negroes, bewildered by the confusion, remained faithful to their owners, working blindly against the forces which fought to free them. Education for all classes was practically suspended, since the energies of the South were devoted to a struggle which dwarfed the importance of a subject that thrives best under the beneficent regime of peace.

In 1865 multitudes of women in the South faced a future devoid of the comfort and household ease so dear to the hearts of all women. The outlook seemed hopeless; yet by persistence and valor they salvaged what remained of the old life and encouraged the building of a newer, more stable one. Undaunted by hardship, they married crippled, penniless veterans and made homes where happiness reigned. Disheartened men were aroused from their lethargy and spurred to renewed

interest and activity in the rebuilding of the South. Corrupt governments, exorbitant taxes, and vindictive reprisals made life almost unbearable. The aristocrats maintained their morale by holding Starvation Parties and making light of their hardships. Since poverty was the badge of aristocracy, it was worn proudly. The middle class, "nouveau-riche," flaunted their wealth in extravagant homes, clothing, and entertainments. Although they were the leaders in the new society, they lacked the prestige which fine old names, and family traditions gave to the patricians. A more democratic distribution of land, made possible by the breakup of plantations, raised the living standard of the industrious farming class. Negroes, catapulted to a freedom for which they were unprepared, were as giddy and restless as children. The preferred treatment given them by the North increased intolerance between the races. Lawless blacks terrified the whites, and caused the formation of the Ku Klux Klan. Unrestrained by anyone, many quickly sank to the depths of degradation. They were, however, free to determine what course their lives would take, whether for good or evil. Education revived slowly after the war. Negroes were amply cared for by Northern philanthropists.

Raids of the Carpet-bag Governments depleted educational funds in the South, placing a serious obstacle in the way of training white children. Public schools were looked on as institutions of charity, but after 1870 this feeling gradually abated and educational facilities were open to all - girls as well as boys.

The Southern woman of any class never resumed the position she occupied before the war. The old ways and customs were changed beyond recall. They were at last free of the fetters which slavery had inflicted upon their efforts. New interests in the social and economic world beckoned them. The old pseudo-chivalry gave way to a less protected but highly respected position. They learned contempt for gossip, frivolities, and idleness. The intellectual interests of these women were large, and they undertook to develop their capacities in a serious manner which laid the basis for the advancement of women in many fields of endeavor. The strengthening and development of latent qualities of sterling value in women's characters was an important outcome of their superb efforts. In short they ceased to strive for the title "Lady," and were proud to have earned the greater one, "Woman."

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