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WOMEN WHO DARED: NORTHERN TEACHERS OF THE SOUTHERN
FREEDMEN, 1862-1872

City University of New York

Ph.D. 1982

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WOMEN WHO DARED: NORTHERN TEACHERS OF THE
SOUTHERN FREEDMEN, 1862-1872

by

ALLIS WOLFE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in History in partial fulfillment of the require-
ments for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 15, 1982
date

Herbert Gutman
Chairman of Examining Committee

April 15, 1982
date

Abraham Ascher
Executive Officer

Sam Foley
Michael Weszler
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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INTRODUCTION

When I began this study of the freedmen's teachers in 1975, little had been written on the subject. W. E. B. Dubois's compelling testament to them was an exception. His description of the teachers resonated with heroism and dedication. "Behind the mists of ruin and rapine waved the calico dresses of women who dared . . . ," he wrote. "Rich and poor they were, serious and curious. Bereaved now of a father, now of a brother, now of more than these, they came seeking a life work in planting New England schoolhouses among the white and black of the South. They did their work well." Dubois called for an historian to write "the annals of this Ninth Crusade . . . ,--the tale of a mission that seemed to our age far more quixotic than the quest of St. Louis seemed to his."¹

Dubois's challenge remained unanswered for quite some time. Finally, in 1941, two white Southern historians wrote books depicting the teachers as anything but heroic. In the Mind of the South, Wilbur J. Cash treated the Yankee schoolmarm as an interfering and almost comic character. He ridiculed her as "horsefaced, bespectacled and spare of frame," the epitome of the meddlesome spinster. In the

Northern Teacher in the South, Henry Lee Swint described the teachers in a similar, though more thorough and respectful manner. Like Cash, Swint believed the Northern teachers were abolitionists bent on reshaping the South in their image. He painted them as naive, zealous, pious, misguided souls who had little understanding of the South or its people. In fact, claimed Swint, the Northern teachers may have done their cause more harm than good. If Southern whites were at first open to the idea of rudimentary education for blacks, they became increasingly hostile to it when Northern teachers used schoolrooms to preach racial equality and support for the Republican Party. Hence, Swint wrote, the teachers "by their attitudes . . . at the outset, destroyed any possibility of securing co-operation, or even acquiescence, from the Southern whites." He concluded that the Northern teachers and their mission had failed.²

In the 1960s, the freedman's teachers began to receive a more sympathetic hearing. Historian James M. McPherson initiated this trend with the publication of his two volumes, The Struggle for Equality and The Abolitionist Legacy. McPherson was clearly sympathetic to the efforts of Northern reformers first to end slavery and then to aid the freedmen in their transition to freedom. He proudly pointed out that abolitionists were responsible for the freedmen's educational effort, chronicled their participa-

tion in that effort, and sketched its outlines. The Northern teachers were heroes once again.³

Interest in the freedmen's teachers blossomed after McPherson's work appeared. In the space of two years, from 1980 to 1981, three new books based on doctoral dissertations were published on different aspects of the subject. These studies took the discussion of the teachers to a new, more sophisticated level. In her ambitious work, Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and the Georgia Blacks, 1865-1873, Jacqueline Jones set out to look at all aspects of the teachers' experience in Georgia during Reconstruction. She concentrated on the American Missionary Association's teachers, who dominated the Georgia scene. Jones paid particular attention to the fact that the vast majority of her subjects were women, and she utilized the past decade's work in women's history to shed light on her female subjects' motives and behavior. Like McPherson, Jones has a generally benign view of the schoolmarm. She takes them at their word--that their purpose was to give blacks literacy skills in order to prepare them for work and life in a democratic society. She also believes, however, that the Protestant work ethic, with which the teachers sought to imbue their pupils, was largely irrelevant to the lives of unskilled agricultural workers. "In the long run," writes Jones, "they [the teachers] were only foot soldiers plodding doggedly along, shortsighted

yet heroic in their own way, as they fought the war against racism."⁴

Historians Ronald E. Butchart and Robert C. Morris have not been as generous in their evaluation of the freedmen's aid movement or of its teachers. They believe that the movement's motivating force was a desire for social control. According to this thesis, which has more frequently been used to describe ante bellum and Progressive era reform movements, elites seek, under the guise of reform to control the underclass, which they believe threatens society with chaos. Elitist reformers generally blame the victims for their problems rather than believe that poverty and unrest result from structural arrangements. The message of this kind of reformer is that the unfortunate should pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, by adopting correct character traits, as defined by the reformers, and by forsaking their old modes of behavior.

In Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction: Freedmen's Education, 1862-1875, Butchart looks at the ideological underpinnings of the freedmen's aid movement. He believes that the Northern teachers sought to convert the freedmen to values more in tune with the requirements of a capitalist society whose lower rungs they were to occupy. The teachers stressed the work ethic, domesticity, temperance, and piety. Above all they stressed obedience. The result, claims Butchart, was

"cultural imperialism." He believes that the freedmen's schools served as a panacea for living in an unequal society. "What did it all mean?" he wrote. "The Afro-Americans were on the threshold of freedom. They needed land, protection, and a stake in society. They needed and demanded meaningful power. They were given instead a school." Interestingly, Butchart claims that the teachers were not abolitionists concerned with politics, but evangelicals concerned with religion. In his eyes, the movement would have been better if it had been more politically committed to the realization of equality and racial justice.⁵

Robert Morris's Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruc-
tion: The Education of Freedmen in the South, 1861-1870 also makes a case for social control, though not as vitriolic or presentist as one as Butchart's. Although Morris purports to examine the full scope of freedmen's education, he spends little time discussing the typical freedmen's teacher, the Yankee schoolmarm. Instead, his book concentrates on the movement's male leaders, administrators, and government officials. According to Morris, these people greatly feared an ignorant black labor force and "felt a pressing obligation to discourage idleness and vagrancy among the former slaves." Unlike Butchart, however, Morris believes that the freedmen's educators truly wanted to fit the ex-slaves for useful and productive citizenship.⁶

The study that follows sheds further light on the subject. It concentrates on the movement's female teachers, who made up at least 75 percent of the freedmen's teachers. They were an idealistic group, committed to bettering the lives of the ex-slaves. Their efforts cannot be written off as being motivated by a desire for social control. Such an approach is far too cynical; nor does it offer an adequate explanation for the teachers' motivations or behavior. When I began this study I wanted to find out how a generation of women reared in what historian Barbara Welter has termed "The Cult of True Womanhood" could have produced such a group of seemingly adventurous, independent, and brave people. I found that the cult, which stressed domesticity and piety for women, was really quite malleable. It was especially open to endeavors meant to help the unfortunate, for that too was within the realm of women's work. So much the better if the work was missionary as well. Under the guise of helping the needy and saving souls, women were free to taste adventure, brave dangers, and travel to faraway places. Becoming a Yankee schoolmarm was seen as part of this same effort. In certain circles it was considered an admirable, indeed heroic, enterprise.⁷

It is my hope that this study will contribute to our knowledge of the large role that women have played in American reform. Surprisingly little is known about the

generation of women who came of age on the eve of the Civil War. While work has been done of late on women in the Colonial, Ante Bellum, Progressive, and recent eras, the years from 1860 to 1880 remain a relative blank spot overshadowed by the political and military consequences of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

This study deals with approximately 300 women from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania who went south during and after the Civil War to teach the ex-slaves. The majority of teachers from the Northeast were stationed in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Hence this dissertation concentrates on these states. In the course of my research I discovered that women were not only important to the freedmen's aid movement as teachers. A female network of administrators and sponsors gave the secular societies and teachers needed financial and spiritual support. It is doubtful that the secular arm of the movement could have functioned at all without these women's involvement. Their story will be told here for the first time.

About fifty Northern benevolent societies recruited, screened, and financed the majority of teachers. In the following pages, I look at two of the main sponsoring organizations, the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC) and the American Missionary Association (AMA). These two groups were the largest and most representative of the

secular and denominational organizations. Although the AFUC and the AMA shared many of the same goals, they had very different ideological perspectives. The AFUC followed a nondenominational membership policy, officially called for equal rights, and allowed no exclusion of pupils in its classrooms on account of race. Many of its leaders had been associated with Garrisonian abolitionism before the Civil War. The AMA, on the other hand, was composed primarily of evangelical Congregationalists who went south to engage in missionary as well as educational work among the freedmen.

Many of the AFUC's female administrators who ran its teachers' committees were feminists as well as Garrisonian abolitionists. Their backgrounds were similar to those of the fifty-one women treated by historian Blanche Glassman Hersh in her book The Slavery of Sex: Feminist-Abolitionists in America. Hersh shows how this group of women became feminists before the Civil War as a result of obstacles placed in the way of their anti-slavery work. They belonged to the more liberal, Protestant denominations, either by birth or, in the majority of cases, by conversion from one of the traditional or evangelical denominations. Most were Unitarians or Quakers who rejected the Calvinist doctrine of infant damnation and the traditional scriptural view of women. Their Puritan heritage and Perfectionist creed led them to believe that the rejuvenation of society was

possible and that they had a duty to bring it about.⁸

The AMA's all-male leadership, on the other hand, held a much more traditional view of women's role. Before the war, many AMA leaders belonged to the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (A&F) led by Lewis and Arthur Tappan, wealthy New York brothers. When the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, opened its ranks to women, the Tappans and other conservatives believed the anti-slavery cause would be hurt by introducing the extraneous issue of women's rights. They led a walk-out, set up the A&F, and wrote a constitution stating that women in their organization would have their own separate societies and would be represented at conventions by male delegates. Women in the AMA were dealt with in a similar manner. While the AFUC attempted to treat its male and female teachers alike in terms of salary and authority, women in the AMA occupied a traditional, subordinate position. As this dissertation shows, the AMA's policies caused it and its teachers no end of trouble.

Any evaluation of the teachers must first place them within the context of their times. The freedmen's teachers were heirs of the Puritans. Like their forebears, they saw themselves as part of an elect who had a duty to bring about a more perfect society. The democratic and Christian republic that the freedmen's aid workers envision-

ed required virtuous and educated citizens, a goal made impossible by slavery, which relied on coercion and ignorance. The Northerners held to a long standing nineteenth-century belief that reform should be based on individual effort and reformation. Just as they tried to win their case against slavery by appealing to each American's conscience, so they now thought it was their duty to educate the freedmen so that they could take their place as responsible citizens. The reformers could show them the way, but ultimately the blacks would be responsible for improving their own lot. However, the Northerners believed they themselves should control and define the process. In their scenario, the ex-slaves would gain power slowly, only after they had been sufficiently prepared for citizenship by their friends.

For the most part, the teachers did not question the validity of Northern capitalism. They believed in private property and production and sought to replace Southern slave labor with a free labor system. In the North, a dynamic laissez-faire capitalism encouraged the belief that each man was responsible for creating his own station in life. Good character and a sharp eye for promising opportunities would ensure a man's future. The freedmen's advocates applied this way of thinking to the Southern blacks. They too would sink or swim depending on

their abilities. What they needed was an opportunity to enter the race on an equal footing.

As advocates of the freedmen, the teachers and administrators were anxious to prove that the blacks were capable of making a respectable, if humble, place for themselves within American society. They did not really anticipate that the freedmen would aspire to become Yankee businessmen. Rather, their fondest hope was that the majority of ex-slaves would form an independent peasantry in the South. In time, however, as the blacks were reduced almost to peonage, taken advantage of, and terrorized by Southern whites during and after Reconstruction, many of the teachers came to believe that it was not so much the blacks' individual failings that held them back as the dominant political and economic exigencies of Southern life. Under the tenant and share crop systems, no matter how virtuous or hardworking blacks were, they would never be able to buy their own land. The growth of the Ku Klux Klan and the passage of the Black Codes also hindered their participation in electoral politics.

The Yankee schoolmarms did not believe that with oppression came moral or any other kind of authority. Those teachers who harbored such ideas, especially in the area of religion, changed their minds once in the South. Neither were they acquainted with the concept of cultural

pluralism. It never occurred to them that a middle class Yankee code of values and behavior might not be the best, indeed the only, model for the South and its people. New England's educational system, religion, morality, and work ethic remained the teachers' reference point and ideal. It took a rare individual, such as teacher Elizabeth Hyde Botume, to temper this belief. Even then, the most sensitive and reflective teachers did so within a paternalistic context. Like parents who feel responsible for their children's actions, the Northerners believed that they were being judged by the freedmen's successes and failures. Hence, they constantly admonished the blacks not to disappoint their friends. If only the freedmen would follow their prescriptions, the teachers told them, they would be happy and productive.

Although much of the Northerners' teaching may have been misguided, if not irrelevant to the lives of the ex-slaves, the teachers did mean well. They risked their lives to bring literacy to the freedmen while trying to give them a sense of self-respect and self-sufficiency. Their humanitarian concern and optimism about the blacks' ability to lead productive lives in freedom were progressive--perhaps even radical--for their era. At a time when most Americans were not particularly concerned about the fate of the ex-slaves, these reformers were. And they

were willing to do something about it.

One means of judging the nature and success of the reformers' mission is to look at the reactions of the people they tried to help. According to most indications, the freedmen welcomed the schoolmarm and tried to take advantage of the positive things they had to offer. They considered their lives to be better for the teachers' efforts. The relationship of the reformers and the Southern blacks was complicated by differences of class, race, and sex. Could two groups ever have been more different than these? Their story is a dramatic one filled with tension, empathy, gratitude, courage, and even love.

NOTES

¹W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk (Chicago: McClurg, 1904), p. 31.

²Wilbur J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941), pp. 140-41. Henry L. Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941), p. 59.

³James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964) and The Abolitionist Legacy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

⁴Jacqueline Jones, Soldiers of Light and Love (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 208.

⁵Ronald E. Butchart, Northern Schools, Southern Blacks, and Reconstruction (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 9.

⁶Robert C. Morris, Reading, 'Riting, and Reconstruction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 154.

⁷Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860." American Quarterly 18 (1966): 151-74.

⁸Blanche Glassman Hersh, The Slavery of Sex (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

CHAPTER I

WANTED: TEACHERS OF THE RIGHT STAMP

In 1905 William Lloyd Garrison Jr. was asked to speak at Ednah Dow Cheney's memorial service. He was not alone; quite a few old friends from past battles shared the platform with him that day to honor the reformer long active in the struggle for the rights of blacks and women. When Garrison's turn came he spoke about Ednah Cheney's ten-year association with the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. Ednah Cheney, recalled Garrison, "organized and was the active and efficient secretary for the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, which for years supported a corps of teachers for the colored schools in South Carolina and along the Southern coast."¹

Garrison went on to describe the young teachers sent south by the Teachers' Committee of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, which Ednah Cheney had so ably administered. "The early teachers were many of them volunteers from the best New England families, going from homes of comfort and culture to labor among the poor and ignorant in rough surroundings, and in communities in which they were ostracized by the native whites. They were the ad-

vance-guard, sewing the seeds of civilization with as high and noble a purpose as ever inspired crusader or missionary."²

Historians have estimated that between the start of the Civil War in 1861 and the flagging of the Reconstruction effort in 1872, several thousand Northerners went south to teach the freedmen. Most were women. At the beginning of the project it was not expected that women would make up the majority of the teachers. But over the course of time, it was women who flooded the freedmen's aid societies with their applications to go south, women who organized auxiliary societies to raise money in support of the teachers, and women who actively served on the teachers' committees. Men also participated in the freedmen's aid movement, but not in as great numbers and most often in different positions. Men were more likely to be officers in the home office or superintendents in the field rather than teachers.³

Although the various freedmen's aid societies continually called for more male teachers, they found few men "of the right stamp." By 1866, Ednah Cheney had come to the conclusion that the most desirable men found "the prizes of business too tempting, or their needs too imperative, to devote two or three of the best years of life to hard duty for a despised people, in a dangerous climate, and for a small remuneration." "But New England women,"

continued Cheney, "strong and brave enough for any work, have not been wanting, and we have not feared to send them even where men were asked for; and they [have] neither flinched from danger, nor been discouraged by toil."⁴

When the benevolent societies issued a call for teachers to go south to educate the freedmen, they received an overwhelmingly positive response from women. One might wonder why, in an era when Northern women were largely defined by their domesticity, so many eagerly applied. The anti-slavery effort helped to set the stage for the Yankee schoolmarm, as did the spread of evangelical Protestantism and its missionary spirit. Advances in women's education and changes in their employment and marital patterns were also important factors.

Most of the women who became freedmen's teachers considered themselves to be part of the broader anti-slavery movement. The future Yankee schoolmarm participated with members of her immediate and extended family, schoolmates, and teachers in anti-slavery activities. She read abolitionist tracts and newspapers and attended numerous anti-slavery lectures, fairs, and meetings. Freedmen's teachers Sallie Holley, Caroline Putnam, Anna Gardner, Lucy and Sarah Chase, Charlotte Forten, and Laura Haviland, among others, all left memoirs documenting their early

preoccupation with and participation in the anti-slavery cause.⁵

Historian Henry Lee Swint found that many of the teachers came from areas where abolition was popular among large segments of the population. The heaviest concentration of teachers came from New England, with Massachusetts heading the list. In New York, Swint discovered, the majority of teachers came from the Burnt Over District. This western New York area had been settled by New Englanders and was known for its evangelical fervor and popular reform movements, including female moral reform, prison reform, health reform, and Sabbatarianism. But by far the most important cause supported in the district was freeing the slaves.⁶

In choosing their teachers, the freedmen's aid societies were concerned with the pre-war beliefs and activities of applicants in regard to slavery. An abolitionist background was important especially to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society (NEFAS), whose Teachers' Committee was made up of staunch abolitionists. For example, in 1863, applicant Caroline Haven asked for a letter of recommendation to NEFAS from Caroline Dall, a well-known abolitionist and feminist. Miss Haven explained:

They would like to have a testimonial from some person well known for anti-slavery opinions that I entertained similar opinions before the war broke out, that consequently I would feel a real interest in the race, and in the work of instructing them. I think you can safely say this having known the opinions of my parents upon this subject.⁷

In addition to their strong anti-slavery sentiments, the women who joined the freedmen's aid movement grew up in an era renowned for its religious enthusiasm and missionary zeal. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the old Calvinist doctrine of predestination gradually gave way to one that emphasized the individual's free moral choice in combating sin. Sin, large segments of the population now believed, was located in each person, and it was up to the individual to change and to help others to do the same. According to this activist doctrine, denouncing sin was not enough; one had to do something to eradicate it.

Many future Yankee schoolmarms were imbued with evangelical religion and the missionary cause as part of their formal education. For example, at Mount Holyoke, one of the schools which spawned many freedmen's teachers, students as a matter of course received both religious and secular education. Mary Lyon, founder of Mount Holyoke, proclaimed her school "a school for Christ." Lyon systematically required her students to "attend church and to remember the text, headings and subdivisions of the sermon, to make a systematic study of the Bible, to join in a worship service each morning and a prayer meeting each evening (besides a longer mid-week service), and to spend two half hours daily alone in prayer and meditation."⁸

Lyon preached an activist gospel to her students

similar to that of well-known evangelical preacher Charles Finney. She believed that divine grace could be had by those who opened their hearts to Christ. Salvation was no longer to be experienced by a small, predetermined elect, but was a matter of individual choice obtainable by all believers. But individual conversion was not enough. Christians, following Christ's example, had to work to help save others. Lyon believed that people who died without converting, died without hope of everlasting grace. She thought that the great work of converting the heathen had to be done before the millenium, in order for Christ's reign of peace and justice to be established on earth. If Christians did not work unceasingly to convert the non-believing, they were committing them to hell. Mount Holyoke had an active missionary society to save the heathen from such torment.

In schools like Mount Holyoke, young women were taught that teaching and missionary work were highly respected and desirable professions. Historian Louise Porter Thomas has noted that at Mount Holyoke, "to teach the Indians, or the Southern Negroes, or join forces with a home missionary, were undertakings differing only in degree of boldness, not in quality of motive, from that of the foreign missionary." According to Edward Hitchcock, a contemporary of Mary Lyon and supporter of Mount Holyoke, "The pupils were taught that they ought to engage in the

business of teaching from a sense of duty, and a benevolent desire to do good. They were not to avoid any field of labor because it was hard and uninviting. They were to hold themselves in readiness to go to any part of our wide country where Providence should point out the post of duty; and such would easily be persuaded to go to foreign lands on a like errand of mercy."⁹

Three developments in Northern education also helped to produce the Yankee schoolmarm: the expansion of educational opportunities for women resulting in the rise of the female seminary; the growth of common schools; and the replacement of male teachers by women. Pre-Civil War efforts of educational reformers to improve female education had resulted in the female seminary, the incorporation of which reached its peak between 1830 and 1860. Female seminaries were replaced by colleges after the war.

In the Northeast, the successful demand for female education coincided with the rapid growth of common schools. Female educators, such as Emma Willard and Catherine Beecher, saw the seminary as an excellent training ground for future teachers. They forcefully argued that women were better suited than men to teach the young and that they would do it for less money. Apparently their argument held sway. From the 1830s on, local school districts, hard pressed for money, increasingly hired women teachers whom they paid less than male teachers.¹⁰

The ability of middle-class women to support themselves, even modestly, was important at a time when there were fewer eligible men. Between 1830 and 1890 the number of women who never married increased dramatically. While men went west to seek their fortunes, in eight Eastern states--Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Rhode Island--there were far more single women than men. The 1860 census showed that in the state of New York women of marriageable age exceeded men by 38,783, and in Massachusetts by 27,001. One of the only careers open to these unattached women was that of school teaching.¹¹

It is clear why so many women responded when the call was issued for freedmen's teachers. A large group of Northern women was already available for work--many of them educated and experienced teachers who were not married. They had grown to maturity in a fierce anti-slavery climate, and many believed that the highest service they could perform as Christians was missionary and educational work among former slaves.

When Union troops first entered Southern soil at the beginning of the Civil War, anti-slavery northerners stood poised, ready to come to the aid of Southern blacks. The freedmen who in 1861 first flocked behind Union lines at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, and Port Royal, South

Carolina, were desperately in need of many basics. Most pressing were adequate food, clothing, and shelter. Their Northern friends would not desert them now.

One organization in a position to help was the American Missionary Association (AMA). Founded in 1846, the association drew many of its members from the anti-slavery Amistad Committee. The AMA began as a missionary society whose membership leaned towards evangelical Christian abolitionism. Its Constitution read, "The object of this society shall be to send the Gospel to those portions of our and other countries which are destitute of it, or which present open and urgent fields of effort." To the AMA, the South in 1861 certainly constituted an "open and urgent field of effort" in need of the Gospel.¹²

The AMA that year sent the Reverend Lewis C. Lockwood to work among the blacks near Fortress Monroe. The "depressed condition of religion" among the "Contrabands" was Lockwood's primary concern. He began his work among a special group of blacks, many of them educated, free, and members of the Baptist Church in Hampton, a town subsequently burned by Southern troops. On their own initiative but with the support of the AMA, this group started several schools for blacks in the area. Mrs. Mary Peake, a free Negro, established the first such school on September 17, 1861, while Lockwood put his energies into organizing three churches and two Sunday schools. The AMA

also organized physical relief. The association's Boston auxiliary alone sent down a hundred barrels of clothing during the first year. By the following year, the AMA employed thirteen missionaries and teachers in the Hampton-Fortress Monroe area. Its educational effort soon spread to South Carolina.¹³

Although the AMA was officially nondenominational, it was made up mostly of Congregationalists. To a lesser extent Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers also carried on freedmen's aid work in the South. These religious societies were joined by secular societies organized expressly for the purpose of aiding the freedmen. The AMA sent fewer teachers to the South during the war than did the secular societies. By the end of the war it had 327 missionaries and teachers in the field, as opposed to about 700 for all the combined secular societies. This ratio would be reversed during Reconstruction, when the AMA's influence and investment in black education grew substantially.¹⁴

The first secular freedmen's aid societies received their impetus in the summer of 1861 when Edward L. Pierce was assigned by General Butler to help the Contrabands pouring into Fortress Monroe. Pierce, a Boston attorney and anti-slavery advocate, was a personal friend and political supporter of Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase. Butler put

Pierce in charge of ministering to the physical needs of the destitute refugees, partially by superintending their labor on Union fortifications. Although Pierce's stay was short, he was able to lay down certain principles that would govern policy toward the blacks while they stayed at the fortress. The Contrabands would be paid for their work; they would be expected to work the same number of hours as the white workers; and they would receive the same rations as the soldiers. Through these policies, Pierce was able to show that by good treatment and paid labor blacks would work as well as whites. This was an important example to those Southerners and Northerners who doubted the ability of blacks to work under a free labor system without the coercion of slavery.¹⁵

A few months later, Pierce's services were again called upon in South Carolina. In November 1861, the Union fleet captured Port Royal Island and the other Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina. The North was faced with the problem of what to do with the eight thousand blacks who remained on the islands after the whites fled to the mainland. Pierce looked into the situation for a few weeks and recommended the appointment of Northern superintendents to help run the abandoned plantations.¹⁶

Through his experiences in Virginia and South Carolina, Pierce developed other ideas about how to help the blacks in their transitional state from slavery to

freedom. In January 1862, he wrote a letter to Secretary of the Treasury Chase in which he outlined a plan to send ministers and teachers to the Sea Islands. The black population of the large Sea Island plantations had been particularly isolated from whites and had little knowledge of the larger society in which they would now have to make their way. Once in the South, according to Pierce's plan, the ministers and teachers would open schools for black children and generally help the black population cope with the new situation. All Pierce wanted from the government was its authorization to allow the teachers to go to the South. Money for salaries, Pierce believed, could be raised privately.¹⁷

Before leaving for South Carolina, Pierce had talked with friends in Boston about his educational plans. Especially responsive was Jacob Manning, assistant pastor of Old South Church, who subsequently called a meeting in his home to discuss steps to help the freedmen. At this meeting a committee was appointed to prepare a plan of organization and to nominate officers. On February 7, 1862, at the Young Men's Christian Association, the constitution of the Boston Educational Commission was adopted. It read, "The object of the Educational Commission shall be the industrial, social, intellectual, moral, and religious improvement of persons released from slavery in the course of the war for the union." The commission's name was later

changed to the New England Freedmen's Aid Society.¹⁸

Pierce and the other Boston reformers did not act alone. General Sherman and Commodore DuPont also reported from South Carolina to their friends in the North about the "wretched condition of the practically freed yet unemancipated blacks" and called for immediate Northern aid. Still another sympathetic observer, the Reverend Mr. Mansfield French, went to the Sea Islands at the request of two prominent AMA officers, Lewis Tappan and George K. Whipple. Upon his return, French helped to organize a mass meeting at Cooper Institute in New York City on the evening of February 20. At the meeting the moving communication of Sherman and DuPont was read to the audience. As a result, the New York National Freedmen's Relief Association was formed, with long-time abolitionist Francis George Shaw as its first president.

One month later, in Philadelphia, J. Miller McKim formed a similar organization. At still another public meeting held in National Hall on March 5 Sherman and DuPont appealed on behalf of the blacks of South Carolina. This meeting spawned the Port Royal Relief Committee, whose name was later changed to the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association.

All three societies immediately began to send teachers south. In March and April 1862, the Boston and New York societies together sent fifty-one teachers. After

six months, seventy male and sixteen female teachers were working among the freedmen of the South. The success and growth of the educational effort of the Boston, New York, and Philadelphia groups by the end of the Civil War is revealed in the following chart.¹⁹

	Number of Schools	Number of Teachers	Number of Pupils	Number of Auxiliaries	Amount of Money Collected
New England Branch	60	150	10,000	88	\$69,342.99
New York Branch	124	243	13,744	336	99,235.97
Pennsylv- ania Branch	32	62	5,000	90	48,524.45

The three societies shared similar goals and politics: All were dedicated to aiding blacks through education. Each society was nonsectarian and purposefully chose its officers from the different Protestant denominations. Each was secular and forbade religious instruction in their classrooms during the regular school week. Their common approaches made it possible for them to cooperate.

In 1862 the three societies, together with other freedmen's aid societies in the West, began to discuss the possibility of forming an official union. There followed a series of attempted unions, from the United States Com-

mission for the Relief of the National Freedmen to the American Freedmen's Aid Commission and finally the American Freedmen's Union Commission. Recalling the situation in her Memoirs, Ednah Cheney noted how confusing the situation became: "We were always uniting societies and changing constitutions, and half the time did not know what our real title was. . . ." Hannah Stevenson, also of the Boston Teachers' Committee, was more critical. She thought these changing parent organizations were costly and inefficient and actually did little except issue "worthless circulars" while their officers received big salaries.²⁰

The formation of the American Freedmen's Union Commission (AFUC) in 1866 particularly angered Stevenson. The commission was to be made up of ten secular freedmen's aid societies in Northern cities and the West, joined by the American Union Commission, an organization formed in 1864 to help loyal white refugees in the South. Officially the AFUC would aid Southern blacks and whites equally, allowing for no discrimination on account of color in admission to its schools.²¹

Some members of the original Boston group, including Stevenson, found it difficult to work with the American Union Commission after having dedicated long years to the anti-slavery movement. They preferred to help those they had fought so long to free, and they did not want to see their funds go toward aiding Southern whites. According to

Stevenson, who resigned her post as secretary of the Boston Teachers' Committee, to be replaced by Ednah Cheney, the merger was rushed through with "indecent haste," and the New England society was told that it would take place whether or not it agreed. This left no time to consult with branch societies that financially supported the New England organization. Aside from that, said Stevenson, "I said from the first that I would not give my services to the Southern whites. I could find enough of that hue to work for in New England. . . ." Stevenson reported to her friends Lucy and Sarah Chase that she was not alone in her opposition. Messrs. Endicott, Manning, Lowe, and Pierce, Mrs. Cheney, Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, and Mrs. Cabot also were against the policy.²²

The New England group joined the AFUC but maintained control over its own day-to-day operations. The Teachers' Committee retained its power to appoint the teachers it send south. The main task of the parent body would be to determine where schools should be established, thus avoiding any duplication of effort. Despite the AFUC's open aid policy, it found few Southern whites willing to attend its schools.²³

Not all participants in the freedmen's aid movement were to be found in the organized societies. Individual communities and churches sometimes set up schools in the South and sent down their own teachers. A few women who

were either wealthy in their own right or able to raise the money themselves through friends and relatives went south to start their own freedmen's schools. Sallie Holly, a well-known abolitionist speaker before the war, and her close friend and lifelong associate Caroline Putnam successfully ran such a school in Lottessburg, Virginia, for many years. And women such as Laura Towne, Ellen Murray, Elizabeth H. Botume, and Martha Schofield, initially connected to the secular freedmen's aid societies, maintained their schools after the societies shut down their offices.

To apply for a position as a freedmen's teacher, the applicant wrote to a society stating her qualifications and why she wanted the position. This letter of application was usually followed by recommendations or testimonials from clergymen and from the principal of the school where the woman had been a student or taught. NEFAS kept a daily record in 1865-66 of its correspondence on teacher recruitment. The Teachers' Committee tried to screen each applicant carefully before commissioning her. As Ednah Cheney told one correspondent, "Our standard is high and experience convinces us that one must keep it so, for the work demands great ability as well as the most religious devotion to the cause."²⁴

Cheney's comments on individual applicants show

that age and experience were very important to the New England society. Next to eighteen-year-old Harriet Risley's name, Cheney wrote in the ledger, "we have fully decided against employing any so young." The next candidate, Miss McAlister, at twenty-three had already taught for twelve terms. "This is full as young as we like to send," wrote Cheney, "but if she has strength of character and self reliance with other good qualities we might accept her." Twenty-six-year-old Miss Crowley, on the other hand, with ten years of teaching experience inspired the comment "so far so good." The committee was also concerned about taking anyone it considered to be too old. After Miss L. H. Andrew's name, Cheney jotted down her thoughts: "36, taught 7 years. So much in her favor if still energetic, enthusiastic and able to bear the toils and privation of the work."²⁵

On the whole, the committee was pleased with the women it chose. But there were exceptions. In a letter to Mr. Hewes of April 17, 1866 Cheney recounted an unpleasant experience the committee had had with a candidate supported by Hewes. Miss Henrietta Gooding had come to see the committee in early April. She made a good impression and was to have some recommendations sent from Portland, Maine. Soon the testimonials arrived. One from Mr. Baker was "full and ample" except for a small notation that he had not seen her very recently. Another was sent from

Judge Kingsberry and another from Hewes himself, a pastor of "a highly respectable Society." On the strength of these recommendations Gooding was commissioned as a teacher and told to go directly to Virginia "where a teacher was urgently needed." She asked to be paid two months' salary in advance, instead of the customary one month. Reluctantly the society gave her seventy dollars. Although she was expected to leave the next day, she delayed going because of dress-making reasons. On the day she was to leave, Mrs. Theodore Parker sent a note to Miss Stevenson of NEFAS saying that Gooding had asked to borrow fifty dollars from her on the grounds that the society had delayed her commission and she had expenses to pay at the hotel. When Stevenson confronted Gooding, she claimed to have spent all the money given to her but had no adequate explanation. Stevenson confiscated her commission and her ticket to Virginia.

"The opinion of the Committee varies a little," Cheney wrote to Hewes. "Some think she is an artful, dishonest person whose object was to obtain money under false pretenses; others that she is a person of weak mind and weak moral perception, entirely unfit to take care of herself or act properly towards others. I told her that refunding the money would alone convince us of her honest intentions. Deeming her possibly unsound in mind, we wished to be sure she was returned to her friends, and our

Secretary Mr. Chaplin, met her at the Station and provided her a ticket to go to Portland." She missed the train.²⁶

In 1867-68 the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Commission kept a detailed Commission Book on the teachers, matrons of the teachers' houses, superintendents, and principals that the society sent south that year. The name, position, salary, race, religion, and age of each successful candidate was carefully entered by hand in the book's narrow columns. Of the 145 people listed in the book, 124 were women (109 white, 15 black) and 18 were men (9 white, 9 black). Among them were five married couples. The Reverend and Mrs. J. S. Dore of Portland, Maine, were typical. The Dores, both white Baptists, were supported by the Portland Auxiliary. Mrs. Dore was commissioned to go south as a teacher, while her husband was to serve as a principal. The majority of white men were married and accompanied by their wives, but most of the women who went south were single. This did not mean that they traveled alone; at least ten brought along a mother, sister, or cousin, and an indeterminate number went with a friend.²⁷

Miss Nellie M. Chase had applied with high recommendations to the New York branch for a commission as a teacher. Her one condition was that "Miss Mattie Birge an intimate friend . . . and graduate of the same institution as myself can go with me to the same place. . . ." Twenty-

three-year-old Nellie and her twenty-year-old friend were subsequently stationed together in Richmond, Virginia. Emily Peduzzi and Annie Fernold from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, commissioned as teachers in Raleigh, North Carolina, by the New York society, were also probably friends before they went south. Both were in their late twenties, they belonged to the Unitarian Church in Portsmouth.²⁸

A definite order seemingly determined by sex and race could be discerned within the New York group in 1867-68. Eighty-three percent of the women, including all of the black women, and all black men, were commissioned as teachers, while only one white man was sent in that capacity. Seven white men were sent as either superintendents or principals. Of the remaining white women, five were signed on as matrons, sixteen as superintendents or principals. White males, then, generally served in supervisory capacities while most of the white women and all of the blacks went down as teachers.²⁹

The pay scale of the New York society was based upon the level of responsibility of the position. Women teachers received twenty dollars per month, matrons twenty-five, and female principals and superintendents thirty dollars. Male principals and superintendents usually received thirty dollars per month, in some cases more. The salaries of the men teachers, however, showed less

uniformity. Of the black male teachers, five were paid twenty dollars per month; four, twenty-five dollars. The one white male teacher received thirty dollars per month.³⁰

Until 1866, NEFAS's salary scale was similar to that of the New York group, with male and female teachers being paid at different rates. In that year, however, the New England society, whose members were especially sensitive to women's rights issues, voted to pay both sexes the monthly sum of twenty dollars plus board. The society's constitution was amended to read, "No difference between teachers, as regards salaries, should be made between male and female."³¹

In monetary terms, the freedmen's aid societies offered approximately the same salaries to teach in the South as they earned for similar work in the North. In 1865, Barnstable County, Massachusetts was paying its female teachers twenty dollars and eighty-four cents a month and Franklin County, Massachusetts, was offering them nineteen dollars and fifteen cents a month. Male teachers in Barnstable County, however, were earning forty-nine dollars and eighty-two cents per month, considerably more than the freedmen's societies were willing to pay them, even on the level of principal or superintendent. This was no doubt one of the reasons the societies had difficulty in recruiting male teachers.³²

The median age of the New York society's teachers was twenty-six. Black female teachers tended to be about three years younger. The women who served as matrons ranged in age from their mid-thirties to mid-fifties. Male and female principals and superintendents, falling midway between the teachers and matrons, were in their late twenties to early thirties.

Everyone in the New York group, save one Roman Catholic, was Protestant. The evangelical churches had the largest contingent: the majority identified themselves as Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, or Congregationalists. Among the rest were smatterings of Unitarians, Swedenborgians, Episcopalians, and Dutch Reformed.

This religious breakdown generally held true for the New England society, although it had a higher proportion of nonevangelicals. In 1865, the society reported that of its fifty-four teachers, the majority belonged to evangelical churches, but there were eight Unitarians and three Quakers. The number of Quakers was also higher in the Pennsylvania society.³³

Female auxiliaries of the freedmen's aid societies contributed their organizational skills, time, money, and energy for the freedman's educational effort. Northern women were, in fact, the backbone of the secular societies. While the American Missionary Association did not form any

female auxiliaries until 1880, the New England, New York, and Pennsylvania groups all quickly established female branches or auxiliary societies to support the teachers in the field. These organizations put up the teachers' salaries, sent down supplies, and kept up a steady correspondence with teachers in the South.³⁴

By 1866, members of the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association's Women's Central Branch were successfully demanding a greater voice in decision making. In July it was ruled that the Committee on Education would be staffed jointly by the main branch of the association and the women's branch, and the two groups would now share a common treasury. Five months later, however, female auxiliary members of the Women's Central Branch complained that they had no voice in the Women's Branch, let alone in the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association. They aptly pointed out, "In our philanthropic institutions the same necessity exists as in our government that those who contribute of their means should have a voice in the management of affairs." This problem was solved when every "aid society, both in the city and country" was requested to "appoint a delegate to attend the general meeting of the Women's Central Branch."³⁵

In that same year, the New York branch issued a report on the progress of its auxiliary societies to the Reverend Lyman Abbott, AFUC general secretary. The com-

mittee reported that it had organized 452 auxiliary societies in New York State, which were "generally composed of ladies."

The secret of the New Yorkers' success lay in their organizing techniques. First an agent for the society published a notice in the local papers "inviting all the ladies of the place to attend" a public meeting to discuss the topic of freedmen's education. He also tried to have the meeting announced from church pulpits on the Sunday before the meeting was to take place. At the meeting the agent would lay out his organization's plan. He told his audience:

If you raise \$500 to-night, or if your society pledges to pay us that amount within the educational year, we will allow you to nominate a representative of your own, a devoted, competent, Christian lady, whom you know, and in whom you have confidence. We will send her South into one of our schools, make her an inmate of one of our 'homes' and put her into regular correspondence with you. Her letters will be read at your meetings, and published in your papers. You will see what is done with your money. Her salary will be \$20 a month.³⁶

Next, officers were elected, "one or two from each church and congregation, according to the size of the place, for the purpose of securing the support of all the denominations. . . ." Then "two or three gentlemen pass from pew to pew, with a paper and pencil to record subscriptions for the support of a teacher from the locality."³⁷

The Yonkers Freedmen's Relief Association of New York was typical of the auxiliary societies. A year after

its first meeting was held in September 1865, its weekly business meetings were drawing an average attendance of thirty out of a membership of sixty-one. The society also held "working meetings" each Friday from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. in order to meet the teachers' demands for more warm clothing. Each woman would take two unfinished garments from the meeting to make at home.³⁸

The Yonkers society had at first pledged to support five teachers, but it was soon supporting seven. In their frequent letters to the society these teachers frankly discussed the difficulties they were encountering among hostile Southern whites. Undoubtedly, the sympathetic support of auxiliary members eased the teachers' feelings of isolation and gave them strength to continue their difficult work. Conversely, auxiliary members felt satisfied in the knowledge that they were aiding the destitute freedmen and especially proud that a member of their community and of their sex was carrying on such important and dangerous work with "no small amount of heroism"

The Yonkers society, like other auxiliaries, found many ways to raise money and necessary items for the teachers and their pupils. Lecture series, fairs, and festivals, like the one held by the society in November 1866, were popular fund-raisers. In Rockland County, New York, for example, one woman enthusiastically reported that "young ladies of Rockland Institute, in which we have a

brave auxiliary, held a fair. . . . Some flowery articles from Theodore Tilton, who played auxioneer instead of editor, were accepted at a fair price."

The New England group had a similar organization of auxiliary and branch societies. In Boston, however, the Teachers' Committee retained more power over the selection of teachers. When a New England auxiliary society felt ready to support a teacher, the auxiliary was to consult with the Teachers' Committee, which would "help them to make an adequate choice." Unlike the New York society where auxiliaries usually chose teachers from their local communities, the New England auxiliaries, under the guidance of the Teachers' Committee, "as often chose to accept one already in the field as to nominate a candidate." But the duties of auxiliary members and teachers were the same for New England as for New York. As the New England Freedmen's Aid Society instructed its members, "it is the duty of the adopted teacher to correspond with the branch society, which assumes her support, giving them all the interesting information in her power; and they in turn, are usually happy to supply any incidental wants of clothing or other necessities which are needed for the people under her care."⁴⁰

The Freedmen's Aid Society of Dorchester and Milton Village, Massachusetts, and their appointed teachers successfully fulfilled this informal contract. In 1866,

society members reported their experiences with two adopted teachers. "Frequent correspondence has been held with both these ladies," they wrote, "and we are happy to say that our confidence has not been misplaced, and that we have helped to sustain in the field two heroic, self-sacrificing women, who do honor to our state in serving so faithfully the cause of the outcast in a hostile community." For their part, society members not only raised money, but also sent down their secondhand clothing, "emptying their chests and closets." In the last month alone they had sent down nine and a quarter barrels, which included:

8 Army Blankets; 4 Comforters; 4 Bed Quilts; 3 Cradle Quilts; 5 Carpet Mats; 106 yards Calico; 53 yards Crash; 7 yards Cotton Cloth; 121 new Garments; 431 second-hand Garments; 114 Pocket Handkerchiefs; 29 pairs Shoes and Slipners; 57 pairs Stockings; 51 Hats, Bonnets and Hoods; 2 Keroses Lamps; 1 Porcelain Shade; 7 Chimney; 1 Crater; 2 packages Wicking; 5 pounds Prunes; 1/2 pound Ginger; 1/2 pound Tea; 1/2 pound Coffee; 1/2 pound Cooking Soda; 2 cans Condensed Milk; 1 box Mustard; 3 papers Corn Starch; 1 paper Farina; 1 paper Yeast Cakes; 20 Cakes Soap; 2 Hand Brooms; Books, Magazines, Child's Papers; 18 Packages S.S. Cards.

Needles, Pins, Thimbles, Thread, Buttons, Hooks and Eyes, Tape, Wax, Weltine, Cord. Knitting Needles, Hair Combs, Brushes and Hair Pins, Shoe Lacings, 1 box Collars and Bows, Neck-ties, Needle Books, Holders Neck Laces, Lead Pencils, Slate Pencils, Pens and Penholders. Slate. and Maps.⁴¹

While the majority of the secular societies' teachers were evangelicals, their female administrators were often from humanistic, nonevangelical churches which rejected such doctrines as original sin, salvation, and the existence of hell. The women of the New England Freedmen's

Aid Society's Teachers' Committee spent their formative years in the midst of upheavals in New England's social and religious thought. Committee members Ednah Cheney, Hannah Stevenson, Abby May, and Lucretia Crocker were influenced by successive waves of Transcendentalism, Garrisonian abolitionism, and the movement for women's rights. All were Unitarians and devoted followers of Unitarian Minister Theodore Parker, as was Josephine Shaw Lowell of the New York group. Ednah Cheney and Abby May were also active feminists who joined in the founding of the New England Women's Club in 1868, during their tenure on the Teachers' Committee.⁴²

Members of the New England Teachers' Committee enjoyed a close, collective working relationship. According to Cheney, "the action of the Teachers' Committee was so perfectly harmonious that it is difficult to separate the work of any one from that of the others." Sometimes they ran into trouble, however, when they carried their familiar and easy relationship beyond the confines of the Boston office. Hannah Stevenson had to apologize to J. Miller McKim of the New York branch, who felt insulted by one of her letters. Stevenson explained, "We in this office, are accustomed to play with each other and with our trusted correspondents with weapons of that sort; and relieve the brain overtaken with grave cares by gerifs [sic] and cracks at each others' expense."⁴³

The relationship between the New England Teachers' Committee and the teachers it commissioned tended to be more egalitarian than that between the New York Branch of the UFUC and its teachers or between the AMA and the teachers it sent south. In 1866, the committee unanimously rejected a letter of instruction drawn up for the teachers by McKim. The disagreement, wrote Stevenson to McKim, was "based on very different relations between the teachers and committees, it is decided that these two Societies will each have its own different letters of instruction . . . the relation between this Committee and its teachers is peculiar and delicate and not expressed by the tone of your letter. Philadelphia approves ours." Four days later, Stevenson reiterated the committee's position to McKim. "Your letter of instruction did not represent the tone of feeling of this Committee towards its teachers; nor the relation subsisting between it and them."⁴⁴

Every year when the teachers returned from the South for their summer vacation, the New England society held a teachers' festival. Preparations were carefully made, a hall was hired, and tickets given out. Thomas Wentworth Higginson usually presided as the chairman. At these festivals the teachers and their Northern supporters heard lectures and exchanged experiences. As one participant observed, "the teachers were hungry to hear some good speaking after their dearth at the South, while the home

people were equally anxious to hear the account of their work."⁴⁵

For Cheney, the "peculiar and delicate" relationship existing between the Teachers' Committee and the teachers may have been a reflection of religious and philosophical differences. But teachers' committee members tried to bridge them as exemplified by the shy Lucretia Crocker. While Crocker never spoke from the platform at a festival to welcome the teachers back from their work, she could be seen "gliding among the teachers, grasping their hands, looking into their faces with her peculiarly earnest, sympathetic gaze, hearing their stories, giving counsel and encouragement. . . ." According to Cheney, the teachers "always felt great support from her sympathy, not just in their personal trials, but in every detail of their work." Crocker's--and other committee members'--concern for the teachers' welfare lasted beyond their tour of duty in the South. Cheney recalled that Crocker "always retained her interest in the teachers, many of whom she regarded with strong personal affection; and she aided them as far as lay in her power."⁴⁶

Differences in religion, then, did not appear to mar relations between the New England society and its evangelical teachers. These differences, however, along with AFUC religious policies, left the secular freedmen's aid societies open to criticism from the American Missionary

Association. The attitudes of the two organizations in regard to religious proselytizing were markedly different. Where the AFUC allowed for no religious instruction in the classroom, adhering strictly to separation between school and church, the AMA expected its teachers to conduct religious education among the blacks, whom it saw as a religious people, best reached on a religious level.

The AMA felt it contradictory for the AFUC to recruit the majority of its teachers from evangelical churches, but to insist that evangelical religion be kept out of their teaching. Spreading the gospel, after all, was a basic evangelical tenet. An article written by the Reverend O. B. Frothingham, a Unitarian officer of the New York branch of the AFUC, especially angered the AMA. Frothingham asserted that

Rationalists and Unitarians, who reject the scheme of salvation, whose religion is chiefly ethical, who preach up the interests of this life, intellectual culture, domestic virtue, social kindness, the priceless worth of the simple human relations, may mingle such religion as they have with education, because education is their religion. But evangelical men, who, are supremely interested in the salvation of souls, can not confound them with secular interests, without encountering the dangers of compromising both. . . .⁴⁷

In an article on the subject in its publication American Missionary, the AMA pointed out that Frothingham would set a double standard for evangelicals and Unitarians. Furthermore, his argument was falacious because "almost the whole of the colored people of the South, have been reared under the influence of evangelical religion." In fact,

the chief aim of many of the blacks in coming to the schools, claimed the AMA, was to be able to read the Bible. The AMA article continued:

How utterly inappropriate--to use no harsher term-- it is to send to these poor people, whose religion is dearer to them than life itself, teachers who must be silent on that subject; or who, if they speak their honest sentiments, must tell them that their "blessed Savior" is a mere creature; that there is no hell or personal devil; that the Book which they are so anxious to be able to read, has no claim to be regarded as the Word of God; or that to abandon their church relations is to "come out of Babylon."⁴⁸

These conflicts eventually hurt the AFUC after the war. In 1866, Hannah Stevenson wrote to Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent G. L. Eberhardt that "Since the war has ended, which united the North as a family and broke down sectarian barriers, the old denominational watch-words begin to be heard again; and in this work of teaching the Freedmen, people are every where called upon to unite with their own sect in the various towns." Furthermore, "the present rising of theological questions" observed Stevenson, "has the tendency to lessen the number and the efficiency of our Branch Societies."

In some localities, conflicts over policy questions resulted in the desertion of members from the AFUC to the AMA. Evangelicals were especially strong and numerous in the western branches of the AFUC; between 1866 and 1868, the Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Chicago branches of the AFUC switched their allegiance to the AMA.⁴⁹

Denominational preferences and organizational infighting did not deter the women who went south to teach the freedmen from their belief that religious duty and justice required them to work for the elimination of sin and the betterment of mankind. And what better way to do this than to aid the slaves in becoming free men and women and to participate in the regeneration of the South? These women were ready. They were educated, single, experienced in teaching and highly motivated. When the opportunity arose, they seized it.

In August 1867, Annette Lynch of Ballston Spa, New York, applied to the New York branch of the American Freedmen's Union Committee to become a teacher of the freedmen. Her path was clear, except perhaps for friends and relatives who worried about her safety in the South. Twenty-six years old, she had earned her own living, albeit modest, as a teacher for the past three years; now was her chance to test her convictions and to perform what she believed was her Christian duty. Teaching in the South would also be an opportunity to experience the world outside Ballston Spa, a mere speck on the map.

Annette's teaching ability came highly recommended by Daniel Seymour, and her pastor at the Presbyterian Church stated that she attended his church regularly and was a member in good standing. Both concurred that her

"mental and physical energies are good with habits of industry, economy, frugality, patience and devotion to the work." The local auxiliary of Ballston Spa had chosen her as its representative and now looked forward to receiving her letters from Alexandria, Virginia, where the New York society had decided to send her.⁵⁰

Annette would soon find out if her preconceptions of the South and its people were correct. She would also find her physical endurance and emotional strength tested as never before.

NOTES

¹Memorial Service:Ednah Dow Cheney, 1824-1904, February 20, 1905 (Boston: New England Women's Club, 1905).

²Ibid.

³Henry L. Swint compiled a list of 1,035 teachers who went South to teach the freedmen and found that approximately 76 percent of them were women. Henry L. Swint, The Northern Teacher in the South, 1862-1870 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1941).

⁴Ednah Cheney, "Report of the Teachers Committee," Freedmen's Record, May 1866, p. 86.

⁵See the following: John White Chadwick, ed., A Life for Liberty. Anti-Slavery and other Letters of Sallie Holley (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899); Anna Gardner, Harvest Gleanings (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881); Henry L. Swint, ed. Dear Ones at Home (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966); Ray Allen Billington, ed., The Journal of Charlotte Forten (New York: Collier Books, 1953); Laura Haviland, A Woman's Life Work (Cincinnati: Walden & Stowe, 1881).

⁶Swint, The Northern Teacher.

⁷Letter from Caroline Haven to Caroline Dall, 26 September 1863, Caroline Dall Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁸Louise Porter Thomas, Seminary Militant (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Department of English, 1937), pp. 24, 25.

⁹Thomas, p. 35; Edward Hitchcock, The Power of Christian Benevolence Illustrated in the Life and Labors of Mary Lyon (American Tract Society, 1858), p. 267, 268.

¹⁰Thomas Woody, A History of Women's Education in the United States, 2 vols., (New York: The Science Press, 1929), pp. 397, 410.

¹¹Peter R. Uhlenberg, "A Study of Cohort Life Cycles: Cohorts of Native Born Massachusetts Women, 1830-1920," Population Studies 23 (November 1969), p. 409; U.S. Census, 1860, pp. 36, 210.

¹²When the slaves on board the Spanish slaver Amistad mutinied in 1839 they were captured off Long Island by a U.S. warship. S.S. Jocelyn and Joshua Leavitt among others, organized the Amistad Committee to aid in their defense. The case eventually reached the Supreme Court where a favorable decision was handed down in 1841. For further discussion see: Richard B. Drake, "The American Missionary Association and the Southern Negro, 1861-1866." Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1957; The American Freedman, January 1867, p. 146.

¹³Drake, pp. 7, 9, 10, 11.

¹⁴Ira V. Brown, Lyman Abbott Christian Evolutionist, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 44; American Missionary Association, 19th Annual Report (1865), p. 18-29; Julius H. Parmalee, "Freedmen's Aid Societies," Negro Education; a Study of the Private and Higher Schools for Colored People in the United States (Washington, 1917), pp. 1, 273, 277, 284.

¹⁵James McPherson, The Struggle for Equality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 158, 159; Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1964), p. 21.

¹⁶Rose, p. 29.

¹⁷Ibid., 30.

¹⁸New England Freedmen's Aid Society, Educational Committee Annual Report, 8 (Boston, 1863, 1864), p. 4.

¹⁹Ibid., E. L. Pierce, "Report of the Treasury Department," June 2, 1862, p. 756; American Freedmen's Union Commission, First Annual Report (New York: American Freedmen's Union Commission, 1866), p. 9.

²⁰Ednah Dow Cheney, Reminiscences of Ednah Dow Cheney (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1902), p. 86; Swint, Dear Ones at Home, p. 196.

²¹Drake, p. 15.

²²Swint, Dear Ones at Home, p. 196.

²³Lyman Abbott, "Proposed Plan of Organization," American Freedmen's Union Commission (11 April 1866), p. 5.

²⁴New England Freedmen's Aid Society, Records of the Educational Commission, 1862-1874, Ellen Sturgis Hooper Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, 19 June 1866.

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- 39 Ibid.
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- 41 First Annual Report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of Dorchester and Milton Village, April 1866, pp. 1, 3.
- 42 Ednah Dow Cheney, ed., Memoirs of Lucretia Crocker and Abby W. May (Boston: Massachusetts School Suffrage Association).
- 43 Ibid., Letter from Hannah Stevenson to J. Miller McKim, 16 July 1866, James Miller McKim Manuscripts, Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.

⁴⁴Ibid., Stevenson to McKim, 20 July 1866.

⁴⁵Cheney, Reminiscences, p. 85.

⁴⁶Cheney, Memoirs.

⁴⁷American Missionary, September 1966, p. 194.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia, letter from Hannah Stevenson to G. L. Eberhardt, 20 September 1866; Drake, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰Boston Spa Auxiliary, Application of Miss Annette Lynch, 20 August 1867, James Miller McKim Manuscripts, Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.

CHAPTER II

MOTHERS IN ISRAEL

The first Yankee schoolmarms were recruited early in the Civil War. Some followed in the steps of the Union Army to such places as Port Royal, South Carolina, and Fortress Monroe, Virginia, teaching and ministering to the needs of the thousands of new black refugees. Others were stationed on plantations, where they immediately became involved in the daily lives of the black population. These first schoolmarms functioned as more than just teachers. They were likely also to dispense medical care, clothing, and advice to the blacks who were making the exhilarating and sometimes confusing transition from slavery to freedom. The recipients of the teachers' attention and concern, however, were not the only ones undergoing a dramatic transition. In going down South and working and living among the ex-slaves, the teachers too were entering uncharted waters.

The teachers traveled south by boat. The trip from New York City to Hilton Head, South Carolina, where the government's first Southern headquarters were located, took about four days in good weather. During the war, many

teachers spent additional days traveling by boat or carriage to New York City or Boston, and again from Hilton Head or Charleston to their posts in the South. The government paid their transportation costs, which ran between ten and forty dollars.¹

In many instances the schoolmarms met with difficulties and frustrations in their travels. They were often given very short notice of their day of departure. Irregular ship schedules during the war and unsteady administrative operations on the part of the benevolent societies compounded the problem. In this respect, Charlotte Forten's trip was typical. An educated mulatto woman from a prominent Philadelphia abolitionist family, Forten was commissioned as a teacher of freedmen in the fall of 1862. In late October she received a note from James Miller McKim asking her to be ready to sail for Port Royal, South Carolina, perhaps on the next day. "I was astonished, stupified, and, at first thought it impossible," she confided to her diary, "but on seeing Mr. McKim I found there was an excellent opportunity for me to go." Rushing from Philadelphia to New York City, Forten was on board the steamer United States in less than a week, along with fourteen other passengers.²

Like that of many other teachers, Forten's trip was marred by continual sea sickness. Her companion Lizzie Hunn was sick throughout the entire voyage. The two women

spent a miserable first night in the "close ladies' cabin" and decided to sleep on deck the next evening. The next day it rained, however, forcing them once again to return to the cabin which, wrote Forten, "was almost unendurable."³

The wartime ships were dominated by military personnel and supplies. On an autumn day in 1864, Elizabeth Hyde Botume received a short note which read, "You are hereby appointed by the New England Freedmen's Aid Society a teacher of freed people at Beaufort, South Carolina." The day of Botume's departure soon arrived. Several friends went with her to the docks in New York City to see her off, but they had a hard time reaching her boat, the Arago. Military bands, squads of soldiers, carriages, and piles of military supplies blocked their way. After being pushed and shoved along with the crowd, they finally reached the gangplank and Botume boarded.⁴

Luckily, she had been told to bring along a campstool, which she set up on the side of the deck. For a long time she was the only passenger on board, and she watched "soldiers and officers hurrying to and fro, gesticulating and shouting unintelligible orders" from her perch. She could not go below until the "ranking officer" came on board and furnished the military with their quarters. Botume soon realized that "civilians and especially 'females' were regarded without favor." Consequently, the teachers "had the fag-ends of everything" and what accommo-

dations they were able to get were given to them "grudgingly." On government boats, Botume observed, an unprotected woman without a military friend had a rough time. Fortunately, she did have a military friend, and an important one at that--Major Rufus Saxton. He was returning on the Arago to his post in South Carolina, accompanied by his wife and baby.⁵

As Botume watched from her camp-stool, several other women eventually came on board. They were officers' wives, teachers, and the families of merchants and speculators. Security was strict for women: Botume noted that "not one of them could get transportation and a passport through the lines without first having a teacher's commission and pledging to aid in the work of education." She was told that army regulations were rigorous, "as some mischievous and traitorous women had already succeeded in getting into the military departments."⁶

After a hectic first morning, the rest of Botume's trip was relaxed and pleasant. The boat lifted anchor at twelve o'clock, and the travelers on board soon became friendly and talkative. Botume made friends with the people seated at her table in the dining room, where she felt like a guest "at a private party." During the trip she was entertained with stories told by the officers returning to their posts.⁷

The passage south, however, did little to prepare

the teachers for their new home. Southern blacks, especially, were an unknown quantity to most Northerners on the eve of the Civil War. For Elizabeth Hyde Botume, slavery as well as the slave were "terra incognita." "When brought face to face with the slaves as they were during the war," wrote Botume, "it was like the discovery of a new race. . . . Had they any individuality? Were they, as we were often told, only animals with certain brute force, but no capacity for self-government? Or were they reasoning beings?"⁸

Many of the Northern teachers went south with preconceived notions about the nature of the black man. These values were expressed in the pages of freedmen's aid journals and newspapers. A popular theory expressed in this press conformed to the view of blacks labeled by historian George Fredrickson as "romantic racialism." According to Fredrickson, romantic racialism had its roots in the European Romantic Movement. It rejected the enlightenment belief in environmentalism and stressed instead the inherent differences of the races. Romantic racialists believed that each race was endowed with different characteristics, which did not necessarily imply the superiority or inferiority of the races to each other. At best, Fredrickson pointed out, this theory could have led to a pluralistic appreciation of other cultures, but it was more likely to have racist overtones.⁹

In the second half of the nineteenth century, romantic racialist theory was applied to women as well as blacks. To romantic racialists like abolitionist Theodore Parker, women and blacks shared many traits. In fact, sexual traits and imagery were used to describe the character of whole races. For example, Anglo-Saxons were identified as masculine: they were aggressive, warlike, expansive, exploitative, industrious, and materialistic. Blacks, on the other hand, were a feminine race--docile, lovers of emotion and beauty, religious, and childlike.¹⁰

Harriet Beecher Stowe advanced the romantic racialist viewpoint with the publication of her bestseller, Uncle Tom's Cabin. This book, more than any other, instructed the teachers on the nature of the freedmen. In Uncle Tom, Stowe used the romantic racialist argument to show the goodness, indeed the superiority, of women and blacks who endured, forgave, and kept their religious purity and faith in the face of adversity. Uncle Tom was a sentimental domestic novel that spoke especially to women about the separation of families and the double servitude imposed upon slave women. The blacks depicted in the book were by and large part of the slave elite working as houseservants, cooks, mammys, drivers, and preachers.¹¹

Although the book had little to say about the lives of the average plantation hand, it served as a reference

point for the teachers. In their letters home they constantly compared their experiences to the book and compared the blacks they dealt with to the book's protagonists, especially Uncle Tom and Topsey. Many avidly read the book to the freedmen. For example, AMA teacher Susan Clark read it to her night school. She believed "it would inspire them with a desire to learn to read, and also show them how much we previously knew of their condition, and sympathized with them." Harriet Taylor wrote home from Portsmouth, Virginia, "my life here seems like a continual reading of Uncle Tom's Cabin, so many incidents of thrilling interest are daily narrated to me. . . ."12

Some teachers, however, such as Elizabeth Hyde Botume, were willing to suspend judgment on the inherent traits and capabilities of the black race. The freedmen's aid press also supported this position. According to this view, true black identity could not be known until blacks enjoyed equal rights, opportunity, and access to the larger society. As the American Freedmen editorialized, "The wisest and best friends of the freedmen do not aver that the African race is equal to the Anglo-Saxon. Neither do they admit any race inferiority. They simply assert that the negro must be accorded an opportunity for development before his capacity for development shall be known." The same journal counselled its readers on the necessity

of maintaining an open mind and a laissez-faire approach to the problem, "no man's place in society is to be determined by theory and he fitted for it; but all men are to have the utmost freedom of development, and, as far as society goes, an equal chance, and then make what they can."¹³

Theoretical discussions on the black character did not prepare the teachers to meet the freedmen in any case. Many of the first blacks the teachers encountered were refugees crowded into Hilton Head and Beaufort, South Carolina, at the beginning of the war. The teachers were overwhelmed, dismayed, and even frightened by their numbers, their physical condition, and their appearance. When Charlotte Forten's boat landed at Hilton Head in 1862 she was greeted by a "motley assemblage" of soldiers, officers, and "contrabands" of every hue and size. She wrote, "They were mostly blacks, however, and certainly the most dismal specimens I ever saw."¹⁴

Two years later, Elizabeth Hyde Botume was equally taken aback by the appearance of the freedmen at Hilton Head:

Negroes, negroes, negroes. They hovered around like bees in a swarm. Sitting, standing, or lying at full-length, with their faces turned to the sky. Every doorstep, box, or barrel was covered with them, for the arrival of a boat was a time of great excitement. They were dressed--no, not dressed, nor clothed, but partly covered with every conceivable thing which could be put on the back of a biped. Some of the women had on old, cast-off soldiers' coats, with "crocus bags," fastened together with their own ravel-

lings, for skirts, and bits of sailcloth for head-handkerchiefs. Many of the men had strips of gay carpeting, or old bags, or pieces of blanket, in which they cut arm-holes and wore as jackets. Their pants were tied below and above the knees and around the waist with pieces of rope to keep them on. Words fail to describe their grotesque appearance. Fortunately they were oblivious to all this incongruity. They had not yet attained distinct personality; they were only parts of a whole; once "massa's niggers," now refugees and contrabands.¹⁵

To better comprehend the masses of poor, displaced, and ill-clad blacks who now confronted them, the teachers turned to their previous contact with Irish immigrants in the North. In making the comparison between blacks and the similarly poor, ill-educated, rural Irish, the teachers' view of class affected their view of race. Laura Towne described the first blacks she saw in Beaufort as "about the same as so many Irish in intelligence." Harriet Ware noted that the blacks on St. Helena Island's Smith Plantation were "dirty and ragged . . . , but certainly no more so than poor Irish, and it seemed to me not so dirty." And she remarked that the blacks on her own plantation, Pine Grove, were " . . . much better-mannered than the Irish. . . ." Miss J. A. Shearman, a more worldly traveler, wrote to the AMA headquarters, "I am familiar with the 'lower classes' of England and Ireland, and have no hesitation in ranking the colored children on a par with the best specimens of these. . . ."¹⁶

Once the teachers spent some time with the freedmen, and came to know them as individuals, these initial negative

comments gave way to more positive statements. This process was dramatically illustrated by an AMA teacher serving in South Carolina. Two weeks after arriving at her plantation, she wrote, "Oh, it is miserable enough; and the people are the lowest class of field hands. They all live together; and it is almost impossible to ascertain the relationship between them. Indeed, they do not know themselves, and the children are the dirtiest and most degraded I ever saw. It does not seem as though they belonged to the human family; they are so much like animals I thought at first I must give it up. It made me sick to look at them; they are so filthy." A month later her feelings began to change. "I am becoming acquainted with the people," she remarked, "and have already found warm friends among the old aunties and uncles, and feel very much interested in their welfare."¹⁷

Teacher Lucy Chase's opinion of the blacks also improved as she spent more time with them. When she first encountered blacks on Craney Island, Virginia, in 1863, she found them to be "extremely ignorant, and incompetent for noble, self-originating action of mind or body, uneducated in principle. . . ." Four months later she wrote home, "They warm my heart, these warm-hearted people. One almost worships the wealth of love with which God has blessed them. . . ."¹⁸

The teachers' general beliefs about Southern society

further colored their opinions of the freedmen. The Northerners held to the nineteenth century predilection for seeing the world in hierarchical terms, from the least to the most advanced societies, from barbarism to civilization. They believed that Yankee culture represented the highest order of civilization, the South its lowest rungs. It was evident to them that the democratic North, with its free labor system, free market economy, thriving middle class, growing cities, and common school systems, was clearly on a higher level than the aristocratic South, with its small wealthy patrician class, masses of poor whites and black slaves, sparsely populated commercial centers, and absence of educational opportunities.

The Yankees believed that the freedmen were the least civilized of all Southerners because of their barbaric African roots and their dependent condition as slaves. Thus the Northerners rarely doubted that they were bringing a superior culture to the South and that they were benefiting Southern blacks by teaching them an advanced way of life.

To the teachers, the term "civilized" meant specific things. A civilized person was a Christian person. But being a Christian was not enough: although the freedmen were Christians, their forms of worship did not conform to those of the teachers. Yet the teachers' assessment of black religion was not uniformly negative. Northern

evangelicals in particular were impressed with and sympathetic to the black's religious involvement. AMA officers received many letters from their teachers praising the spiritual state of the freedmen. Anna Carter wrote from Hilton Head that the black's ". . . devotion in matters of religion is calculated to excite the emulation of every Christian." Ella Roper found there was ". . . a deep interest in religion among the people. . . ." Lydia Fuller experienced the blacks as "generally religious," and she wrote, "to talk of Jesus was quite a common theme in their conversation with me, or very easily introduced." Fuller loved to be awoken by the blacks' "songs of praise" on the Sabbath, which recalled for her "the home circle and prayer meetings."¹⁹

The AFUC, the majority of whose teachers were from the evangelical denominations, also received letters remarking favorably on black religion. Emily Hubbard wrote from Petersburg, Virginia:

They certainly have a better knowledge of the truth taught in the Work of God than our people in general at the North. With all of our wisdom we cannot teach them there as they are taught in that simple manner by their preacher. . . . So far as the colored people are concerned, with whom we have come in contact, there are but very few who profess to be Christians who can not give a reason for the faith which is in them, and one need only to listen to them a few minutes to feel that they have the root of the matter in them. This is so contrary to any previously received opinion that I had of them that I am constantly subjecting myself to embarrassments on this account.²⁰

Although the Northerners admired the deep religious

and spiritual feelings of the exslaves, they abhorred the forms taken by black worship. Unitarian and Quaker teachers especially detested the emotional, and what they considered to be irrational, modes of worship among blacks. They believed black services like the "shout" represented the intermingling of two religious forces which they found either barbaric or simply theologically wrong-headed: African religion and enthusiastic evangelical Protestantism. When Quaker Lucy Chase went to a shout on Craney Island in 1863 she thought it a painful example of the black's "barbarism." To her, the religion seemed "purely emotional; void of principle and of no practical utility." Anna Gardner, also a Quaker, wrote of the freedmen's religious services that "the manifestations in these meetings are physical. No indication of mind is visible."²¹

The Northerners also believed that the sexual and marital relations of the blacks obstructed their progress. Under slavery the norms guiding black behavior supported prenuptial intercourse and stable marital unions wherever they were possible. Within this system unmarried mothers were not discriminated against, but were accepted as respected members of the community. With a note of envy, Southerner Mary Chestnut noted this about the black women of Virginia and South Carolina. These women, she wrote in her diary, "have a chance here that women have nowhere else. They can redeem themselves--the 'impropers' can."

They can marry decently, and nothing is remembered against these colored ladies."²²

As might be expected, this behavior shocked the schoolmarms. Elizabeth Hyde Botume felt that all of her "preconceived ideas of propriety and the fitness of things were set at naught." But she was one of the few Northerners who was able to reevaluate her moral code in light of another's culture. In her memoirs she noted that many times she tried to "resist the touching appeal of these poor, ignorant, tender-hearted women for their down-fallen sisters." But after hearing the women's "united testimony" she usually overcame her "scruples."²³

One time a woman named Aunt Judy came to plead with Botume to help one of these "down-fallen" women. Feeling she had to make an example of her, Botume refused to help. But Aunt Judy changed her mind:

She dropped her head, and said very slowly, -
 "That's so, ma'am. You knows best. You mus' be right, fur you'na kin read the Bible, an' so you mus' know best. But I has to go now to the gal, poor creeter! Them wimmins is waiting on me," and she made a courtesy, and turned to leave the room.

"You kin read the Bible, an' you knows more'na me," she had said. And what does the Bible teach me? "Let him that is without fault cast the first stone."

I sprang up, and called her back. It seemed to me I could not work fast enough while making up the bundle of clothing and groceries which I well knew were so much needed.

Her thanks and praise were really humiliating.

"God bless you ma'am! You ain't know how glad I is. I shall run back now, an' all dem wimmins will be so glad too."

All day her words were in my mind. "You mus' know best." What did I know, that I should sit in judgment? Absolutely nothing.²⁴

Other Northerners were less tolerant. One teacher who admired the freedmen's other traits complained that "there is one crying evil among them--the lightness [with] which they take their marriage vows." In 1863 the American Missionary proclaimed that the freedmen had a "low moral standard" that seemed to be the "direct results of slavery." The AMA believed that black women had been sexually debased under slavery, that many had been forced to prostitute themselves, and that the black family had been destroyed. One AMA superintendent claimed that "the effect of slavery on female character had been fearful." The slave woman "was driven from domestic life to the fields to bear burdens fit only for the beast. She was bereft of social position and abandoned to become the subject and victim of grossest passion."²⁵

Many teachers, however, found strong familial ties and sentiments among the freedmen, even though these did not always take forms that met with the teachers' approval. Although the "domestic relations of the freedmen," wrote Mrs. C. E. McKay from Popular Springs, Virginia, are "the most twisted up affairs conceivable . . . [w]hat surprises one in this connection is, that families having no legal bond hang together as well as they do." Botume observed, "We could not say of these people they had no family, the poorest are blessed with relatives."²⁶

Herbert Gutman has suggested that "fictive kin"

played an important role in the development and preservation of slave communities where one's relatives could be sold away at any time. According to Gutman, "the obligations to a brother or a niece were transformed into the obligations toward a fellow slave or a fellow slave's child, and behavior first determined by familial and kin obligations became enlarged social obligation." Indeed, McKay found the "kindness of the colored people towards orphans, and homeless children . . . remarkable." She wrote that "in this respect their humanity often puts to shame that of the whites." Botume also observed the willingness of unrelated blacks to take responsibility for each other's welfare. When she asked Aunt Judy why she came to plead for her down-fallen sister and what relation the woman was to her, Judy's response was, "Oh, nothing, ma'am, only dey's all massa's niggers." When a woman on Botume's plantation named Old Maria became very ill, she went to her friend Smart's house "knowing she would be taken in and cared for. They did what they could for her," wrote Botume. "She was 'one o' massa's niggers,' and had 'no family,' which means a great deal to the colored people."²⁷

The teachers actively tried to reunite families separated under slavery and advised the freedmen on the many complications that ensued. They encouraged, indeed pressured, the blacks to legalize their marriage vows. In 1864, on the South Carolina Sea Islands, Botume reported,

an official order was issued demanding that "all persons living together as man and wife should have the marriage ceremony performed, and get a certificate." Lucy Chase wrote from Slabtown, Virginia, in the same year that the superintendent of contrabands with the help of "the energetic teachers" was "compelling all living as man and wife to take the choice of separation or marriage."²⁸

Although some blacks balked at these decrees, the majority of freedmen appeared eager to cement their marriages. Many of the couples Botume married in the old school-house had been together for more than twenty years. Lucy Chase noted that it was not an uncommon scene to witness mass marriages of more than forty couples, as she did in Virginia in 1864.²⁹

To the freedmen, the fact that the young, attractive Yankee women who so strongly insisted on the necessity of marriage and a regular family life were themselves unattached seemed odd. In contrast, the blacks' former Southern mistresses had married early, often in their late teens. Harriet Ware concluded that she was a "great mystery" to the black women on her plantation. A black woman named Louisa asked her, "Miss Hayiat, you not married? When you going to be married? What, and you so smairt?" Miss Breck wrote home to her Boston sponsors that "It seemed to trouble them greatly because such a beautiful lady is not married." But she told them that if she had

been, she probably would not be there to help them.³⁰

The presence of mulattoes also raised problems for the teachers. Although they most resembled the teachers in looks and often in educational and material advantages, mulattoes were a constant reminder of illicit sexuality and miscegenation among Southerners. The thought of miscegenation was repellent to the AMA, leading it to claim that pure blacks were "in the majority of cases, superior mentally to mulattoes. . . ." AMA teacher Lizzie Parson, on the other hand, suggested that mulattoes were "morally . . . superior to the full blacks on the plantations, have intelligent views of life, and much less superstition in their religious faith. In the cities there is little, if any, difference between black and brown." To the AMA the evils of miscegenation, however, could not be mitigated by judgments of who was superior, the mulatto or the pure black. The American Missionary constantly informed its readers that "License ran riot over this Southern country. How many of the Freedmen are children of lust and not of love?"³¹

Like the AMA, the secular societies were also unsure about how to respond to the Southern mulatto, who seemed so attractive and yet a constant reminder of sexual relations under slavery. When a benevolent society observer who identified herself simply as M. R. S. made a tour of the Sea Island schools in 1866 for the Pennsylvania

society, she stopped in Charlestown to visit Francis L. Cardozo's well-known school. Many of the pupils had been relatively prosperous free blacks living in Charleston before the war. The visitor's ambivalence toward them was reflected in her report of the visit:

My first impression upon entering was that it was a mixed school of whites and blacks. I asked one of the teachers "How does the experiment work?" but was hastily assured that every child before me was of negro origin. Against the evidence of my senses I was forced to believe that white was black. The great beauty among these children and the charming taste in dress and colors of the girls was simply sad.⁵²

Lastly, the teachers dearly valued cleanliness and order. These Yankee women hated nothing more than dirt and disorder in person or property. And they believed that it was the woman who should take responsibility for maintaining such household standards as would be acceptable in New England. The teachers felt that in this area the performance of the black women left much to be desired.

The schoolmarms thought that aside from a few former house servants, the black woman was sorely lacking in domestic skills. Lucy Chase found the female refugees--mostly field-hands--on Craney Island "entirely ignorant of domestic duties." Lydia Fuller thought that the women of South Carolina's Sea Islands neglected their houses and had no idea of how to make them "attractive or comfortable." She found their homes to be very dark, which encouraged dirtiness. Fuller made certain to give the women on the Elliot plantation housekeeping and cleanliness advice and

was gratified when some of them whitewashed their homes. On the other hand, Lucy Chase came to believe that sometimes Northerners unfamiliar with the homes of the poor mistook simple barrenness and poverty for filth.³³

These general impressions of the blacks were first chronicled by teachers in the Sea Islands. On November 7, 1861, the United States Navy under the command of Commodore S. F. DuPont sailed into Port Royal Sound. He and his men secured the area in a day. The white population of the islands had just enough time to load a few possessions on flatboats and escape to the mainland, leaving behind some ten thousand slaves. The story of what happened next has been told by Willie Lee Rose in her book Rehearsal for Reconstruction. Rose argues that blacks, Northern reformers, and government agents worked out new relationships there that foreshadowed what was to take place in the rest of the South during Reconstruction.³⁴

While the Port Royal experiment was never completely duplicated, it did serve as a guide for future freedmen's teachers. The Port Royal teachers were among the first to experience Southern life and they well understood their historic mission to inform the Northern public about Southern conditions. Their observations appeared in freedmen's aid publications and in such progressive periodicals as the Atlantic Monthly and the Nation. Teachers sent to this region left a more comprehensive record of their

experiences than did any other group of Yankee schoolmarms. The letters, diaries, and memoirs of Elizabeth Hyde Botume, Laura Towne, Harriet Ware, Charlotte Forten, and Mary Ames among others have all been published.

The teachers went to the Sea Islands with many questions. How had slavery affected the blacks? Would they work if left to themselves? Were they interested in educating themselves? More importantly, were they capable of learning? The future of the entire educational effort hung on the answers to these questions. The teachers and superintendents on the Sea Islands unanimously agreed: The blacks there were eager for education and, yes, they could learn. One observer wrote in a typical report in the American Missionary, "I never in my life, saw . . . pupils who manifested a greater desire to learn, or who made greater progress in learning." Teacher Anna A. Carter wrote that she had never seen "pupils learn the alphabet more easily." And teacher Mary F. Root claimed to be delighted with her work. She wrote, "I find the colored people pleasant to deal with, and very grateful for instruction. . . . I don't see the difference between them and so many white children in school, except that the older ones learn faster, because they try so earnestly."³⁵

The Sea Island teachers publicly declared their experiment a success. Their positive reports allowed those who followed in their footsteps during Reconstruction to

to be better informed. Through trial and error the teachers learned invaluable lessons about what instructional materials and methods best suited the freedmen, lessons which they imparted to their successors. The significance of this early experiment in freedmen's education and the availability of so many rich firsthand accounts make the Port Royal experience useful as a case study of the relations between the teachers and the black community. Most of the examples that follow are drawn from the Sea Islands case.

Who were the people that the teachers encountered when they took up residence on their Sea Island plantations? According to the United States Census for 1860, the four parishes making up Beaufort District contained 33,339 blacks. All but a handful were slaves. The typical Sea Island slave had been a fieldhand on a large plantation who cultivated the prized long-staple cotton. This valuable, delicate crop had an extremely long growing season, necessitating year-round work.³⁶

Of all Southern blacks, the Sea Islanders were among the least influenced by plantation culture. The islands were isolated from the mainland, and many plantation owners spent at least part of the year away from their plantations, which were considered to be unhealthy during the hottest months. Many Sea Island blacks had been imported directly from West Africa at a relatively late date. These factors taken together meant that the Sea

Island blacks retained more of their African culture and were less assimilated than slaves who lived on the mainland.

Of all Southern blacks the Sea Islanders seemed the most foreign to the Northerners. Many teachers ranked them on the low end of their scale of civilization. Teachers were dismayed at first when they had trouble understanding their language, which one teacher labeled "gibberish."

Harriet Ware noted in her Sea Island diary, "We saw Mrs. Vaughn, who seems to find life here very hard, and repeats the inevitable experience of all those who have ever had anything to do with the blacks previously, that these are the most degraded and barbarous of their race in the country." The next year Harriet Buttrick wrote from Charleston that "teachers from Beaufort, who have visited my school, tell me that my pupils are of a more elevated class than those of the Sea Islands; that their pupils are of a decidedly lower order; and appeared to quite envy me my position." M.R.S. found the contrast between Charleston blacks and those of Wadmelaw Island profound and confusing. About her trip to Wadmelaw, she wrote, "I saw . . . a scene which carried me back to Scripture times. In a rude tent made of four stakes and covered with branches of trees, were two women grinding corn between circular stones. I have just such a picture in my old Bible. This juxtaposition of high civilization and low barbarism is almost

bewildering."³⁷

Slavery in the Sea Islands had produced its own class system among the slaves. On top of the hierarchy were the "swonga" people: drivers, house servants, mechanics, religious leaders, plantation watchmen. Under them were the field hands. Although the teachers generally painted the swongas in more glowing terms, historian Willie Lee Rose has pointed out that their proximity to the whites had led the swongas to absorb more of the white culture and thus be more dependent on whites. The swongas derived more direct benefits from their contacts with whites, but also received daily reminders of their own inferior status. In contrast, the field hands tended to be more self-reliant and less subject to the constant scrutiny of their masters.³⁸

In many ways the slave system of the Sea Islands favored the black woman. Laura Towne believed that under slavery it was the woman who was considered more important and "was in every way held higher than the man. It was the woman's house, the children were entirely hers, etc." Indeed, the basic necessities were issued to the woman and a husband enjoyed them at his wife's discretion. On some plantations, a woman made up her family's clothing from yardage given for that purpose. Weekly rations--mainly corn--were also issued to the woman who shelled, ground, and cooked the food. A woman with help from her children worked the family vegetable patch. Some marketed the

produce and pocketed the money received in exchange. The cabin was considered the woman's and children were listed in the plantation records as belonging to her.³⁹

The status maintained by black women on the Sea Islands during slavery helped them weather changing conditions during the war. The teachers were impressed by their economic self-sufficiency, especially after the able-bodied black men left to become soldiers. Miss E. P. Breck observed that some black women supported themselves by washing and ironing, others by baking pies and cakes. They all had gardens in which they raised ". . . sweet potatoes, peanuts, and various vegetables; always finding a ready market for them." The women on teacher Carolyn Jocelyn's Stoney Plantation on Hilton Head were able to take care of themselves by cultivating their own gardens of corn, sweet potatoes, ground peas (or peanuts), and watermelons, which they sold at "exorbitant prices." Elizabeth Botume found the industrious women of St. Helena Island most impressive. She wrote:

It was not an unusual thing to meet a woman coming from the field, where she had been hoeing cotton, with a small bucket or cup on her head, and a hoe over her shoulder, contentedly smoking a pipe and briskly knitting as she strode along. I have seen, added to all these, a baby strapped to her back.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, dealing with, no less reforming, a people so different from themselves presented the teachers with a challenge. The Northerners' task was not easy. They were in the South to teach freedmen the rudiments of civili-

zation and to help them to overcome the crippling effects of slavery. This job was made especially difficult on the plantations, where the teachers were in the paradoxical position of stepping into shoes similar to those of the former plantation mistress. The shoes were not exactly the same size or style, but there were enough similarities to confuse the blacks at times.

The Sea Island blacks cheered the flight of their masters and the arrival of the Yankees. When their status became that of "Contraband of War" between 1861 and 1863, the blacks realized that while they were not yet legally free, they were no longer slaves. Befitting their new position they protested when Northern superintendents involved in the Port Royal experiment insisted that they plant cotton instead of their desired crops of corn and other vegetables. On the other hand, they had a more positive attitude toward the teachers. Here were white people who actually wanted to teach them how to read and write, and who said they were there to help them in their transition to freedom.

Yet so much had not changed. White people still lived in the big house and the Yankee women performed many of the same functions the blacks' old mistresses had. These newly arrived white women also gave out clothing and sewing materials, administered medical care and supplies,

and gave the blacks information and advice about how to conduct their affairs. And because initially much of the basic structure of their relations with whites had not changed, the blacks relied on the old and tested ways of relating to them.⁴¹

The confusion surrounding the flight of their masters and the uncertainty of their new position made some blacks feel more secure having white women around again. In 1862, when General Hunter ordered able-bodied black men to military duty on the Sea Islands, Laura Towne visited the various plantations in order to comfort the women. "It is not a cheering thing to do," she wrote, "except as it is gratifying to be able to give comfort. They think a white lady a great safeguard from danger, and they say they are confused if there are no ladies about." Harriet Ware met with a similar reaction when she went to see a woman named Doll and her new baby. Mily, the nurse, told Ware that "it did them good to see white ladies about, and hoped we were going to stay." Ware also discovered that the blacks on her plantation, "were uneasy till they discovered our first names, and were pleased that mine was that of the "old missus."⁴²

As they had done every Sunday since they could remember, black women came to the white woman for supplies and help. On May 11, 1862, Ware noted in her diary that "In the morning a number of the women had come up to the

house to see us. It seems they have always been in the habit of coming into the yard on Sundays." Elizabeth Hyde Botume had similar experiences: "Sunday seemed to be the day for setting things to right with the contrabands," she observed. "They came to us for advice and for medicine. We often wondered whether they got this last ready for time of need, or if they kept their ills in abeyance?"⁴³

But in reality, the blacks were not as uncritical of the Northerners as they might have appeared. They evaluated these new white women in terms of the skills possessed by the old mistresses. It took Harriet Ware quite a while to figure out that by "learning," the blacks on her plantation meant medical knowledge, and, she noted, "a person is valued accordingly." Laura Towne was able to put her former medical education to good use, and she became quite renowned and respected among the blacks for it. In 1862, fairly soon after her arrival in the South, she wrote in her diary that she had a "large practice as a doctor."⁴⁴

Sometimes the demands placed upon the schoolmarms were more than they could handle. Many freedmen retained their belief in white omnipotence, and the faith they placed in the teachers was both flattering and disturbing. Miss C. C. Thomas told her Northern patrons that "a Negro teacher must fill the combined offices of teacher, doctor, minister, lawyer, and frequently their valuable services

are called in requisition to settle disputes in families." In light of this unconditional faith, it was difficult for the teachers not to feel inadequate at times. Such was the reaction of Elizabeth Hyde Botume, who noted in her memoirs that,

In times of trouble the contrabands always came to their teachers for help and advice. Sometimes we were much embarrassed to know what to say or do. When I saw their implicit confidence in our knowledge and sympathy, I found it very hard to tell them I could do nothing.

A sick woman came to me one day, who was suffering from a serious organic trouble. After listening to her story, and getting all the facts, I said, "Auntie, that is beyond me. I really do not know what to do for you."

Her look of astonishment and dismay was really startling, as she exclaimed, "O misses! You'na can read books, an' in course you knows more' na we."45

The old proprietary relationships of slavery came into play on the plantation, where schoolmarms entered an existing social system that often they did not understand. It took even the wisest some time to understand the dynamics that lay beneath the surface of black-white relationships. Occasionally it was very obvious, as when freedmen willed their children to the Northerners. Botume observed that "The old feeling, born of slavery, that the white race had a right of possession over the blacks, still clung to them. They not only gave me their children, but tried to exact from me a promise to keep them and take good care of them." Schoolmarms Mary Ames and Emily Bliss had a similar experience with their cook Sarah. Sarah had a close relationship with the teachers and named her child

Mary Emily after them. On her deathbed, Sarah asked Mary Ames to take her seven children north to her "plantation." Ames took the dying woman's request to heart. Although she could not care for all of the children, she managed to place one of the girls with her sister in Springfield, Massachusetts. After she left teaching and went north, Ames sent for two of the boys, but they were already employed and chose to stay in the South.⁴⁶

The blacks--especially house servants who were in close contact with the teachers--sometimes used this proprietary model in working out their own relationships to the schoolmarms. As they had once belonged to white people, they reasoned, so the teachers sent to them by the government must in some way belong to them. During the war, to be sure, attaching oneself to a schoolmarm could offer some amount of security against possible dislocations and other uncertainties. For example, Lucy Chase claimed that during the war a servant of Dr. Orlando Brown, an army surgeon, simply attached herself to the teachers after the doctor left. Wrote Chase, "Mary came to us when the Browns left, said not a word about staying, and heard not a word, but claims us, and keeps with us; an means, evidently to leave the running away for us to do."⁴⁷

Botume was quite surprised when she first encountered this attitude among the blacks. When she told them she was going north for her vacation, one woman reprimanded her,

"You mus'nt go!" she exclaimed with righteous indignation. "Massa Sam sen' you to tuck care o' we, an' you mus' tuck care."

Then to my reply she said, "O ma'am, us tuck you for our missis, an' you mus' stay wid we till you dead we all. Dear missis, what'll us do ef you lef' us here?"

To be so needed and venerated was, of course, seductive, and many teachers slipped into referring to the blacks on their plantation as "my people," "my Sally," etc. Elizabeth James expressed a not uncommon sentiment when she wrote to AMA headquarters from Roanoke Island, "I feel as though they belonged to me. I shall be sorry to leave them."⁴⁸

The old relations of slavery sometimes entered the picture in unexpected ways. At first, many of the teachers were dependent on the blacks for food and other basic necessities. The black women who helped out often had done similar work for their old Southern mistresses. Their nurturance sustained the teachers and certainly made their lives more pleasant. Harriet Ware noted that "Flora, our housemaid, who is a character, has a great deal of dignity and influence among the other negroes, and takes the greatest care of us. She is most jealous for what she considers our interests. . . ." Laura Towne had a similar relationship to her maid Rina. Whatever Towne lacked in the way of food, Rina found a way to supply. "Once we had not a single thing to eat on the table which was not hers," wrote Towne, "and she furnishes our rooms and our cupboard

with a great many articles we could neither get here nor do without."⁴⁹

Lucy Chase was utterly charmed by her cook Nancy, who had obviously spent much time taking care of white women. "We are Subject! to a very curious cook," wrote Chase. "It is evident that she has always been used to ruling the roost. She orders her fellow-servants, the children and ourselves." A few weeks later Chase wrote, "Oh how charming Nancy is! I really love to be ruled by her. She is motherly, kind, fond as one's aunt, and indulgent as a grandma."

"Sarah and I are very happy here, happy enough to say many times that we are very happy."⁵⁰

Of all the blacks, the old house servants made the teachers feel most at home. As slaves, these people had been in daily contact with whites. They were used to relating to white women and taking care of their needs. Now they put their domestic skills to work for the teachers. Elizabeth Hyde Botume met her future servant Jane when doing the rounds of her plantation. She was immediately attracted to Jane because of the condition of her cabin, which as "as clean as possible, with an air of comfort, in spite of its poor condition. The rough floor had been scoured until it had become smooth, and over it was spread fresh white sand." Botume was also attracted to Jane by her "brightness and ready intelligence." Wrote Botume,

"she soon after came to live with me as cook, and was under my care the rest of her days. She proved a wonderful servant and a most valued friend. She belonged to a good class. All her people had been house-servants, and no one of them had ever been bought or sold. This was to her the very acme of respectability. Sometimes she expressed great contempt for what she termed 'country niggers.'" Laura Towne became just as attached to her servant Rina. "She is the best old thing in the world," noted Towne, "and I hope I can take her North with me. . . ."51

The teachers, however, did not find the work of all of their servants up to par. Many teachers were frustrated by slow and shoddy work, tactics which had been cultivated by years of slavery. Lucy Chase voiced typical complaints:

. . . If you want anything done just do it yourself, seems to be the maxim of the Islanders. "Mary Jane, put some warm water in this jug, and clean it for molasses," I say before tea. After tea, I say again, "Mary Jane, put some warm water in this jug, and clean it for molasses," I go to bed. In the morning, I say, "Mary Jane, put some warm water in this jug, and clean it for molasses." Two days afterwards I clean it myself. "Oh, your fire is going out, Mary Jane, put in some wood." In ten minutes the fire goes out, and put in the wood myself.

In coping with this problem abolitionist Chase even went so far as to sympathize with white Southern women. Wrote Chase, "Southern woman have often begged Northern abolitionists to sympathize with them, instead of with the slaves and (while the oppressed are still nearer my heart

than ever) I am fast learning to sympathize with the depressed."⁵²

Harriet Ware felt that she could keep a small house in the country in the North and do all of her own work, save the washing, and still live better than she did in the South having to rely on Southern servants. Laura Towne often felt like her life in the South was like "keeping a hotel with poor servants."⁵³

Early in her career, Elizabeth Hyde Botume worked out a successful way of coping with her servants. When she first set up housekeeping, she was counselled not to use the old house servants. Said her advisor, you "have no more right to ask Cornelia, the old laundress, to wash for [you], than she has to ask me to do her washing." Botume replied that laundry work had not been her business and that she was there to teach the blacks. Furthermore, continued Botume, "Whatever they could do better than I, in so far they were my superiors. In consideration of their 'previous condition,' I give them my time and instruction, whilst I should pay regular wages for their labor. But I should expect good work, and no make-believe."⁵⁴

The Northerners usually paid their servants for their labor, but these and other blacks also presented gifts to the teachers. Much of this giving represented payment for services rendered to them by the teachers, as well as expressions of gratitude. On the first day of school many children came with presents of eggs for the teachers.

Mary Ames was even presented with eggs as a down payment for future services. A woman approached her with a prayer-book, asking to be taught to read it. Ames told her that she would gladly teach her, but that it would take a long time before the woman would be able to read the book. "She was satisfied," wrote Ames, "and as she was leaving, put her hand under her apron and brought out two eggs--one she put in Emily's lap, the other in mine." Harriet Ware also received eggs as payment. When Ware went to visit a woman named Binah, she recalled, Binah "reached to a little shelf at the foot of the bed, off which she took a small tin pail and gave us three eggs--her last. I remonstrated, but she said, 'You gib me ting, I say thank'ee,' so I picked them up and thanked her."⁵⁵

Aside from eggs, the teachers often received gifts of vegetables from the freedmen on their plantations. Miss Breck found that the blacks on Hilton Head Island would not let her pay for the food they gave her. "They want to furnish me with all my vegetables . . . they also bring me chickens, all my wood, . . . eggs, and now they are literally loading me with watermelons. . . ." Mary R. Kimball had a similar experience on Roanoke Island. The grateful blacks insisted on giving their teachers chickens, eggs, and potatoes in return. And in the summer, wrote Kimball, "they seem to vie with each other in bringing their offerings of melons and vegetables from their little gardens."

It is clear that without the generosity of black women the teachers could not have managed nearly as well as they did.⁵⁶

The teachers encouraged the blacks to pay for goods and services rendered with cash or with something of equivalent value. This issue came up especially in regard to clothing collected in the North for distribution to blacks in the South. The Northerners were concerned that if they gave out this clothing gratis, they would be encouraging black dependency, and so they determined that they should be paid something, however small, in exchange for the clothing. Thus they hoped to instill in the blacks "self-reliance" and "self-respect."⁵⁷

The teachers found clothing distribution to be a very draining and difficult task. Lucy Chase felt that "With no means of knowing what is greed and what is need our anxiety and responsibility is unceasing and wearisome." Harriet Ware began to pray that she would not receive any more Northern clothing to distribute. "We thought we should enjoy the giving [of] more things, now that the goods have come by the piece which they prefer to buy," she wrote, "but they are so jealous, and it is so hard to keep the run of so many families so as to distribute the garments equally, that it is hard work. . . ."⁵⁸

Mrs. J. N. Coan had trouble convincing the freedmen that the clothing was coming from private individuals in

the North and not from the government to be given out like rations of food. The magnitude of her task was large. In one month she distributed more than eight hundred articles of clothing and fitted three hundred women and children with shoes. Mary Ames had to rely on a black man, Uncle Jack, to explain the clothing policy to disgruntled blacks who besieged her when boxes of clothing arrived. "Some, whom we do not know, and who live miles away," wrote Ames, "demand clothing and say they have a right to it." Uncle Jack explained to his fellow blacks that the clothing did not come from the government, and that they had to pay for it with vegetables, eggs, chickens, or whatever they could bring in exchange. Martha Schofield found that giving out cloth offered her an opportunity to obtain needed supplies. She received chicken, grits, and sweet potatoes in exchange for clothing. "We find it a much better way," she observed, "they can easily spare something and it helps us."⁵⁹

The teachers also used their clothes-giving functions to teach other Yankee lessons to the freedmen. Elizabeth Hyde Botume claimed that with every garment she gave out she "gave some wholesome advice which was graciously received." She rewarded those who kept their clothing clean and well-mended with another garment, and she reported that to all her advice, the freedmen invariably replied, "You is right, missis! You is right!" Laura Towne developed her own system of giving out clothing on St. Helena

Island. She never gave clothing to anyone she did not personally know or visit, "or who did not bring a note from their employers certifying their need and worthiness. I requested employers to give, such notes only to newly arrived refugees, or to young orphans, or to the extremely old who had no relatives, and I think very little of the clothing has reached unworthy objects."⁶⁰

The teachers were thus intimately involved with the black women of the Sea Islands. To some extent a mutual support system grew up between the two groups. The teachers offered their book learning, gave out clothing, nursed the sick, and wrote innumerable letters. In return, the black women saw to the teachers' physical needs. In some cases the teachers would have found it difficult to survive without help. The teachers' relationships with black men, on the other hand, were more distant. Black women appeared more frequently in the teachers' writings than did men. The teachers tended to comment on black men from afar, observing their changing roles from slaves to soldiers, small landholders, and even politicians with admiration. This feeling of distance, at least on the Sea Islands during the war, was due in part to the men's absence. (In 1862, General T. W. Hunter ordered all able-bodied black men into military service.) But it was also due to tensions that existed between the schoolmarm and black males.

Just living in a society that was segregated by sex made it more difficult for the teachers and adult black males to feel comfortable with one another. The sexual and racial attitudes of both groups increased the difficulty. The teachers commented that emancipation seemed to bring with it assertions of male superiority on the part of black men. Although they wrote about it in lighthearted tones, the teachers were peeved when these attitudes were directed at them. For example, when Mary Ames commented at a meeting on the return of land to the old masters on Edisto Island, a black leader named Ishmael told her she had "better go into the house and attend to study." The statement, wrote Ames, showed that "early in his life as a freedman, he had learned the proper sphere of women." Elizabeth Botume told a similar story of a black man who lived near her plantation. He owned his own land and was a leader in the town and church. He also helped Botume with her chores, bringing her wood and horsefeed. According to Botume he would often ask the teachers their opinions on various matters. When Botume answered him, she observed, he always gave the same retort, with his forefinger emphatically poking his other palm.

"That's so, ma'am. Now, I is going to show you, . . . for you is a women and can't look into every pint.' Then he would repeat word for word what I had told him, giving it as his plan of action, and ending with,-

"'You see, ma'am, women is women, and mens is men,' and that settled the whole."⁶¹

After the war, the teachers resented seeing black men enjoy the vote that they themselves were denied. It was humiliating to the teachers that for all their education they could not vote while black men who were just learning their letters could. After being asked by one man for advice about voting, Botume remarked, "He did not know that with all his ignorance and credulity his name was of far more value than ours, because he was a man, and we only women. He could cast a vote which he could not read, and help to make laws of whose import he knew nothing." She also thought that many black men were too involved with politics, forsaking other duties for endless political discussions and activities. She was distressed that black women did not have a chance to hold office even though they did most of the field work. She wrote, "I am confident they [the women] would dispatch business if allowed to go to the polls; instead of listening and hanging around all day. . . ."⁶²

Some teachers actively opposed the election of black men, whom they did not feel were qualified to hold office. Strained relations resulted. For example, Margaret Newbold Thorpe wrote, "Oh this right of suffrage to a people utterly unprepared! We already see a change in the feeling of some of the men toward us, for we oppose with

all our strength of will and tongue their efforts to get into office, and we tell them how utterly unfit they are; this perhaps will make them angry, and they will accuse us of "trying to keep them down."⁶³

The teachers also remarked on the attitude of superiority some black males had towards their own women. Towne believed that the new power cherished the most by black males was domestic power. Wrote Towne, "The power to have their own way in their families and rule their wives . . . the notion of being bigger than woman generally, is just now inflating the conceit of the males to an amazing degree. When women get the vote, too, no people will be more indignant then these, I suppose."⁶⁴

The teachers sometimes held government agents responsible for encouraging male supremacist attitudes.. Many of the teachers were feminists, and it distressed them to see the blacks taught to embrace patterns of sexual discrimination as they emerged from slavery. For example, Mary Ames reported that when Mr. Alden, the government superintendent on Edisto Island, called a meeting to explain food shortages and rationing during the war, the women were told to leave the church before the meeting even got underway.⁶⁵

Despite these tensions, the teachers had many good things to say about the black men they met. They were pleased when black males exhibited traits consistent with

the prescribed masculine behavior of the day. During wartime that meant physical courage and a willingness to fight. Hence, the teachers believed that black men proved themselves as men when they fought for their own freedom. When black men were ordered into the military in 1862, many Sea Island teachers were at first skeptical about their ability to fight. Harriet Ware, for example, expected that they would be too docile ever to go to war. She felt justified in this belief when black men seemed to make so little fuss over Hunter's order, which abruptly tore them away from their families and crops. Wrote Ware, "The people are used to being made to do things, and are not in the least rebellious, as any white man would have been. . . . I don't believe you could make soldiers of these men at all--they are afraid, and they know it." But the following year she had reversed her opinion. She came to believe that it was "a matter of fact, not opinion . . . that they will fight in open warfare. . . ." Elizabeth Botume believed that their experience as soldiers made black men better appreciate the meaning of freedom. She wrote, "I think the men understood what freedom meant for them better than the women did. They comprehended that they had rights, and this alone would make heroes out of chattels. The women sang, 'We must fight for liberty,' the men had already fought for it."⁶⁶

At times the teachers relied on black men to protect

them from the wrath of white Southerners. In North Carolina, teachers Margaret Newbold Thorpe and Elizabeth Pennock were terrorized by several white men who were hanging around the house they rented and shared with a black family. The man of the house, Uncle Albert, described by the teachers as having an "immaculate old servant manner," confronted the troublemakers. He boldly told the intruders, "The ladies . . . do not want you prowling around; they haven't any white friends here to protect them, but if it is necessary, I will give up my life for them." Said Thorpe, "those men knew as we did that this was no idle threat. Then they left and A. and his boy kept watch all night with loaded guns."⁶⁷

The Yankee schoolmarms and the Southern freedmen made an odd pair. Early pictures show these proper ladies under the Southern sun dressed in somber-toned, full-length regalia next to the poorly clad freedmen. Were two groups ever as different as these?

Armed with their zeal and idealism, the schoolmarms journeyed south to correct the sins of slavery. They would bring light to the downtrodden and make them into civilized human beings. But what the teachers found was completely different from what they had imagined. Few blacks resembled the pure, long-suffering Uncle Tom. Instead, the teachers found a people with their own religion, sexual mores, and values, which often clashed with their own beliefs. Never-

theless, the women struggled to learn, make contact, and help. The need was so great.

Released from slavery but surrounded by their former masters, the freedmen looked for aid wherever they could find it. They were "babes in the woods," easily taken advantage of, and they knew it. No doubt some of the freedmen shunned and distrusted all whites, and most must have felt great, if unexpressed, ambivalence toward them. The Northerners controlled access to too many precious resources. According to the teachers' accounts, however, many blacks actually accepted them as friends. Many turned to the teachers for help and advice. These Yankee ladies were willing to help them in untold ways. Day and night they taught school, gave out clothing, ministered to the sick, and wrote letters. In return, the freedmen opened their arms and protected and nurtured the teachers.

NOTES

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³Ibid., pp. 139-44.

⁴Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Amongst the Contrabands (1893; reprint. New York; Arno, 1968), pp. 22, 23.

⁵Ibid., pp. 23, 24.

⁶Ibid., p. 24.

⁷Ibid., pp. 25-30.

⁸Ibid., p. 4.

⁹George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1971), see chapter four.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom's Cabin (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

¹²American Missionary (March 1867), p. 64; (May 1863), pp. 107, 108.

¹³The American Freedman, 1 (April 1866), p. 3; 11 (October 1867).

¹⁴Forten, p. 142.

¹⁵Botume, pp. 31-33.

¹⁶Rupert Sargent Holland, ed., Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 6; Elizabeth Ware Pearson, ed., Letters from Port Royal, 1862-1868 (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 22; American Missionary (January 1866), p. 2.

- ¹⁷American Missionary (Mary 1865), p. 50.
- ¹⁸Henry L. Swint, ed., Dear Ones At Home (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), pp. 24, 61.
- ¹⁹Anna A. Carter to Simeon Jacelyn, 23 January 1863; Ella Roper to Whippe, 31 May 1864; Lydia Fuller to Simeon Jocelyn, 5 July 1864, American Missionary Association, MSS.
- ²⁰American Freedman (December 1866), p. 152.
- ²¹Swint, Dear Ones At Home, pp. 21, 22. Anna Gardner, Harvest Gleanings (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), p. 48.
- ²²Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976); Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett, eds., A Diary From Dixie, as Written by Mary Boykin Chestnut (New York: Putnam, pp. 114, 142, 222, 224).
- ²³Botume, p. 160.
- ²⁴Ibid., pp. 126, 127.
- ²⁵Mary R. Kimball to J. Miller McKim, 12 February 1866, James Miller McKim JSS, Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University; American Missionary (October 1863), p. 235; American Missionary (July 1868), p. 9.
- ²⁶National Freedman (May 1866), p. 143; Botume, p. 237.
- ²⁷Gutman, p. 220; National Freedman (May 1866, p. 143; Botume, pp. 126, 242).
- ²⁸Botume, p. 157; Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 121; Gutman, pp. 414, 418.
- ²⁹Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 121; Gutman, p. 417; Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 121; Gutman, p. 414.
- ³⁰Ann Firor Scott, The Southern Lady (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 23-44; Pearson, p. 138; Freedman's Record (July 1866), p. 162.
- ³¹American Missionary (October 1865), p. 221, (October 1870), p. 234, (September 1870), p. 210.
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³³Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 23; Lydia Fuller to Simeon Jocelyn, 5 July 1864, A.M.A. MSS; Swint, Dear Ones, p. 233.

³⁴Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal For Reconstruction (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

³⁵American Missionary (June 1862), p. 137, (April 1862), p. 89, (April 1863), p. 91.

³⁶Rose, pp. 116, 126.

³⁷New England Freedman's Aid Society, Educational Commission, Annual Report (Boston 1864), p. 21; Pearson, Letters, p. 288; Freedmen's Record (April 1865), p. 114; Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin (December 1866), p. 5.

³⁸Guion Griffis Johnson, A Social History of the Sea Islands (Chapel Hill, 1930), p. 130; Rose, p. 130.

³⁹Holland, p. 184; Johnson, p. 137.

⁴⁰Freedmen's Record (December 1864), p. 24; Caroline E. Jocelyn to AMA headquarters, 20 July 1864; American Missionary Association MSS; Botume, p. 53.

⁴¹Ann Prior Scott, p. 36.

⁴²Holland, p. 21; Pearson, pp. 25, 22.

⁴³Pearson, p. 36; Botume, p. 117.

⁴⁴Person, p. 25; Holland, p. 38.

⁴⁵National Freedman (May 1866), p. 143; Botume, p. 98.

⁴⁶Botume, p. 83; Mary Ames, A New England Woman's Diary in Dixie in 1865 (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), pp. 93-95.

⁴⁷Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 60.

⁴⁸Botume, p. 198; Elizabeth James to George Whipple, 6 August 1864, American Missionary Association MSS.

⁴⁹Pearson, p. 25; Holland, p. 131.

⁵⁰Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 47.

⁵¹Botume, pp. 58, 59; Holland, p. 78.

⁵²Swint, Dear Ones At Home, pp. 63, 37.

- 53 Pearson, p. 144; Holland, p. 38.
- 54 Botume, p. 129.
- 55 Pearson, p. 121; Ames, p. 31; Pearson, p. 45.
- 56 Freedmen's Record (July 1866), p. 162; Mary R. Kimball to J. Miller McKim, 12 February 1866, James Miller McKim MSS, Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University.
- 57 Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 105; First Annual Report of the Freedmen's Aid Society of Dorchester and Milton Village (Massachusetts, 1866), p. 5.
- 58 Swint, Dear Ones At Home, p. 84; Pearson, Letters, pp. 51, 52.
- 59 American Missionary (January 1864), p. 70; Ames, Diary, p. 70; Martha Schofield's Diary, Martha Schofield MSS, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, p. 51.
- 60 Botume, p. 121; Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin (October 1866), p. 4.
- 61 Pearson, pp. 42, 164.
- 62 Ames, Diary, p. 121; Towne, Letters, p. 184.
- 61 Ames, p. 121; Botume, p. 266.
- 62 Botume, p. 273.
- 63 Richard L. Morton, "Contrabands' and Quakers in the Virginia Peninsula, 1862-1869," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 61 (October 1953): 202.
- 64 Towne, p. 184.
- 65 Ames, p. 92.
- 66 Pearson, pp. 42, 164; Botume, p. 152.
- 67 Richard L. Morton, "A Yankee Teacher in North Carolina, by Margaret Newbold Thorpe," The North Carolina Historical Review 30 (October 1953): 574.

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERNERS OF DIFFERENT STRIPES

Most white Southerners saw the freedmen's educational movement as an attack on their way of life, especially on Southern race relations, and the Yankee schoolmarm received considerable attention as the movement's most visible symbol. The Southern press depicted her as either a fanatic missionary sent to instill dangerous ideas of social and economic equality in the former slaves or a loose woman from the lower classes who was forced to work for a living. Southerners vowed to resist the Northern invaders in any way they could. As a result, they ostracized, threatened, harassed, and denied the teachers such essentials as housing and even food. No one harmed the women physically; not even the most enraged Southerner would go that far. In some localities, however, teachers carried on only because of the presence of the Northern army. Once the army withdrew, life often became so unbearable that the teachers were forced to leave, often in the wake of a school burning. That the teachers stayed in the South despite such treatment and the generally hostile atmosphere testified to their courage and also indicated

that not all Southern whites actively opposed them.

Many Northern teachers suffered at the hands of their white contemporaries from the day of their arrival in the South. Southerners were infuriated when the Northern reformers took up residence and set up schools for blacks in confiscated houses during the war. The AMA's Mrs. J. N. Coan described such a situation in Norfolk, Virginia. She wrote that it was impossible to describe the anger of her "secesh neighbors," "to think that 'these detestable nigger-teachers' should occupy the house of their friend, Mrs. Jones, and walk on her tapestry, carpets, and drink out of her china cups."¹

Not all Southerners passively accepted the presence of Northern intruders, and the protests of some were passionate and persistent.

In the early days of the educational effort angry Southerners expressed themselves through verbal harangues and abuse directed at the Northern teachers. It was most odious to the Southerners to be associated or identified with "niggers," to be a Yankee, or both. Elizabeth Hyde Botume grew used to being called the N.T. (Nigger Teacher) around Beaufort, South Carolina. Lizzie Pennock became so accustomed to being called a "damned Yankee" that when she heard someone describe her as "that Yankee" she felt "defrauded" until she realized that it was missing the "familiar adjective." AMA teachers in Augusta, Georgia,

suffered from the verbal abuse of local whites who treated them with "perfect hatred." AMA teacher Mrs. Smith wrote home from Augusta that "The people are very bitter in their feelings towards us, and the remarks that daily reach our ears through our pupils, who labor for them, might make us uncomfortable all the time if we allowed them." Threats and rumors continually reached the ears of teacher Eunice Congdon, stationed in Danville, Virginia. One was that the government buildings would not be standing for long; another, that the teachers were going to be "rode on a rail for teaching the d_d niggers." Congdon and her fellow teachers consoled themselves with the thought that "if they meant to carry out their threats, they would not talk about it. . . ."2

Many Southerners resented the missionary aspects of the teachers' work. It was bad enough for them to have been defeated in the war, but to be inundated with "evangels of the gospel" who believed in the superiority of Northern ways and who were determined to remake the South in the North's image was truly intolerable to them. An editorial in the rebel paper, the Norfolk Virginian, called the coming of the Yankee schoolmarm "the refinement of torture." It continued:

It did not draw our flesh off the bones as with hot pincers; nor did it stretch our muscles on the rack, and fill our whole physical system with aches and pinches; but it was the more refined torture of an insult to our pride of manhood and our feelings; it was heaping coals up on our mental anguish--to have

sent among us a lot of ignorant, narrow-minded, bigoted fanatics, ostensibly for the purpose of propagating the gospel among the heathen. . . .³

Southern women earned the reputation of being more persistently hostile to the schoolmarms than their men, as Mary Ames and Emily Bliss found on Edisto Island. In the winter and spring of 1865, planters were traveling to and from the island to arrange with government representatives for the repossession of their property. "Many of them were gentlemen," recalled Ames, "who came into our school and whom we entertained at our table, but when they were in possession and were joined by their families, it was different. The women ignored us." The women of Columbus, Georgia, were even less hospitable to the schoolmarms. They appointed a Committee of Ladies to call at the teachers' home and request them to leave town. This visit was stopped only by the arrival of a New York regiment.⁴

Sexual innuendoes and slurs also played their part in the Southerners' attacks. Martha Schofield reported that stories constantly circulated in South Carolina that the teachers were the scum of Northern society and of doubtful reputation. And upon her arrival in Charleston, teacher Emma Tabor was told that the surrounding county was indignant because it was believed that a Northern woman had been sent "for the purpose of mixing the nations. . . ."⁵

Apparently Southern women had their own special reasons for disliking the Northern schoolmarms. According

to Charles Wallace Howard, editor of a Georgia agricultural newspaper, the bitterness of Southern women was due in part to the helplessness they experienced during the war. Men had a chance to fight back, but women, said Howard, "were compelled to endure in silence, the indignities and deprivations, the memory of which they have not forgotten.

. . ." The one power that Southern women did have was their control over social and familial life, and they were determined not to let the Yankee schoolmarms into their circles.⁶

Southern women also blamed or associated the Northerners with their declining economic position. Elizabeth Hyde Botume believed that much of the Southern women's anger came from their recent impoverishment. "Many ladies most delicately reared were obliged to take up menial service," wrote Botume. These women often associated their own fall from economic grace with the teachers and projected their feelings of loss of status onto them. Botume observed that many of the Southern women who came to her for help with employment despised the hand that helped them. As one woman told her, "Oh, yes; I find I am obliged to do like all you Yankee women, earn my own living, and make all the money I can."⁷

Southerners of both sexes tried in numerous non-violent ways to obstruct the schoolmarm's work. Groups of men lined the streets of Lexington, Virginia, to stare

and laugh at Julia Shearman and her companion Miss B. The teachers sometimes encountered difficulty in obtaining food. "We have so far, vainly endeavored to buy milk, one lady sending word she would not sell milk to Yankees to save her life, she hated the very ground they trod," wrote Shearman.⁸

Some Southern whites also refused to sell or rent houses or land to the Northern teachers. Sarah Campney was greeted with a chorus chanting "Here comes Hell" when she arrived in Cuthbart, Georgia, and found it hard to secure a place to rent. Even Unionists were reluctant to shelter the despised schoolmarm. Miss H. Taylor of the AMA wrote:

There are supposed to be some white Unionists in Portsmouth, but none, could be found who were willing to shelter a teacher of the "contrabands." I consider myself fortunate in obtaining a place in a respectable colored family. I have quite a large room comfortably furnished, and think I shall be happy here, in spite of my isolation.

Anna Gardner found that when she tried to buy land for a school in Charlottesville, Virginia, the white inhabitants set up numerous obstacles. According to Gardner, it was only through "persistent determination" that the teachers finally were able to purchase a site.⁹

Acts of vandalism against Northern school buildings and the property of teachers as well as physical threats against pupils and teachers occurred throughout Reconstruction. Young, white Southern males, many of whom were

students at nearby schools, often were the culprits. Anna Gardner was harassed by university students in Charlottesville, Virginia. She observed:

. . . their "calathumps"--that is, bands of students making a raid on houses, out-buildings, fences, etc., at night--and oftentimes committing depredations and insults for which they go unwhipped of justice, constitute them the terror of the place.

In Petersburg, Georgia, Emily Hubbard had trouble with local white boys, who congregated in the yard of her school "at times throwing stones at the house." She planned to ask the mayor for his help. Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent G. L. Eberhardt also had to appeal to the authorities for help. He wrote to Major General Davis Tillson, "Sir, I regret that an almost uninterrupted continuance of the annoyance by white boys, of the teachers and pupils of the Freedmen's school in Campbells Church compels me again to call upon the mayor of the city to put a stop to it. The pupils are almost everyday stoned, and some of them beaten; and not infrequently stones are thrown into the school-rooms." When the schoolhouse in Oxford, Georgia, was burned down, the Northern teachers believed it was the doing of white college friends of Mr. Anderson, whose school blacks refused to attend.¹⁰

Southerners also vandalized freedmen's schools in the larger cities. In Norfolk, Virginia, teachers reported that whites had begun breaking into the school, taking whatever they could find. The teachers had had locks put

on the doors, but these had been broken off and more books and slates stolen. Finally, one night someone smashed a window, threw in a piece of coal, and burned the school down. Teacher Jane Welch reported that her Augusta schoolhouse had been vandalized and every ink well removed. For two weeks she had to open the doors with sticks because both doorknobs had been taken.¹¹

The number of such attacks against teachers and school property rose and fell throughout Reconstruction. A surge of violent protest immediately after the war gradually tapered off, only to reemerge after 1868. In the years between 1866 and 1868, many teachers and Freedmen's Bureau agents reported that public opinion favoring black education was growing, especially among the upper classes. In 1867, teacher Fannie Graves believed that the whites' attitudes toward the teachers were softening a little. "We are inclined to think it is improving," she wrote, "they do not circulate as many malicious falsehoods about us as formerly. . . . They have ceased staring at us as if we bore the mark of Cain on our foreheads." In North Carolina, Anna Gardner also thought relations were improving, if only in that the teachers were "no longer openly taunted, and habitually persecuted--but simply 'let alone.'" In the same year, Freedmen's Bureau agent Reuben Tomlinson found on a tour of South Carolina schools that more white Southerners were sympathetic to black education than he had

expected. He was impressed that in Cheraw the colored people were allowed the use of the town-hall for an educational meeting that was attended by several of the town's whites.¹²

Plantation owners were sometimes willing to cooperate in setting up schools for the children of their workers because these would help attract or keep the best laborers, who would otherwise seek such opportunities elsewhere. In Raleigh, North Carolina, agent F. A. Fiske observed that schools on plantations were multiplying rapidly. Fiske believed that the schools were spreading because planters were beginning to see that it was in their best interest to encourage them. According to Fiske, "a school on the plantation [was] a most powerful attraction to the best laborers, and the readiest way to secure such, and make them contented and happy." The Freedmen's Bureau report for Georgia for 1866 also noted that there had been a decrease in violent opposition to school for blacks, and that some planters had opened school voluntarily and at their own expense. The following year several planters around Brunswick, Georgia, told agent G. L. Eberhardt that they would share the expense of putting up schools for blacks on their plantations, but few wanted Northern teachers to staff them. Some planters told the agent that they would only donate land if Yankees had nothing to do with it. Freedmen's Bureau agent William White was also

successful in getting local whites to help pay for black education. At Perry, reported White, George Singleton offered to give the black educational association one acre of land for a schoolhouse and fifty dollars toward the building. Another white citizen offered five acres of ground for a school on his plantation. In the same year Freedmen's Bureau agent Douglass Aisley reported from the rice plantations near Brunswick, Georgia, that the plantations of New Hope, Eliza-Field, Hopfield, and Oak Hill were going to unite and send their children to one school. The building would be furnished by whites, who would give up one of their churches for a year for that purpose.¹³

In many places such cooperation on the part of white Southerners seemed to be short-lived. The case of Georgia shows the extremes to which some Southerners were willing to go. In her study of the Georgia freedmen's teachers, historian Jacqueline Jones looked in detail at the patterns of white resistance to freedmen's education. Jones found that the level of violence rose in Georgia after 1867, when a coalition of radical and moderate Republican congressmen established a military government there. The violence intensified the following year, when local and federal elections were held in which blacks could vote.¹⁴

When the Ku Klux Klan was founded in Augusta, Georgia, in 1868, its first effort was to stop blacks,

teachers, and Freedmen's Bureau officials from organizing or conducting schools for blacks in Georgia. Freedmen's Bureau agent William White encountered innumerable difficulties when he tried to organize schools in Georgia's western and northeastern counties. He wrote from Talbotton:

There is one thing certain the Rebels in this section of the state, must be taught a lesson. On my arrival there, I was informed by the colored people that threats had been made by the whites that our meeting should not be held . . . failing in that . . . they came to the meeting to get into a row with me by making hostile demonstrations. They also failed in that but frightened the colored so, that they were afraid to organize an association. They snapped a pistol in the church. . . . They cursed just as though they had been in a gambling saloon. . . I am anxious to know what protection I can depend on before I go any farther into this mean country.

Teacher Mary Vauleer reported that she was being threatened and harassed by whites in Ellaville, Georgia. During the election her school was set on fire, and once she found the message, "Miss Mollie Vauleer, look out for the KKK," written inside her school. Margaret Paine was forced to close her Milledgeville, Georgia, school because of threats from the KKK to burn her house down. Sarah Champney reported from Cuthbart, Georgia, that the teachers were being frightened at night and generally harassed by the KKK. And in Columbus, teachers found a drawing of a coffin, shroud, skeleton, and cross bones, with various threats attached to it, outside of their door. It was signed the Ku-Klux-Klan.¹⁵

Teachers and administrators had varied reactions

to the hostility and violence of white Southerners. Individual efforts to deal with the problem were coupled with broader policy decisions by the freedmen's aid administrators. The Northerners attributed white hostility, especially on the part of the poor, largely to jealousy over educational opportunities given to blacks but denied themselves. The teachers reasoned that this hostility towards freedmen's education would lessen if whites too were given access to schooling, so they took steps in this direction.

First, they opened their schools to whites as well as blacks. This was done not so much to appease whites as to uphold the principle of racial justice, that is, that no child could be excluded from school because of his or her color. However, in 1866, Lyman Abbott, head of the AFUC, reported that integration had already been a failure in the larger cities and towns, where few whites would send their children to black schools.¹⁶

Efforts to integrate the schools met with more success in rural areas, but this too was very limited. The most notable and best publicized example was a school run by the AFUC in Summerville, South Carolina, twenty miles from Charleston. Susan Hosmer, the teacher responsible for this development, believed that white parents in the area were anxious to have their children taught and were troubled because the black children were learning while

theirs were not. She felt that the white population was as ignorant and destitute as the black. Hosmer believed that the impartiality shown by Northern teachers to both whites and blacks in the area allowed the whites to accept her and her colleagues. "While they were poor, and wretched, bacon, meal and clothes were dealt out without discrimination," she explained. When she announced that they could come to school, twenty white students showed up. Eventually she had sixty pupils, thirty white and thirty black. Hosmer was happy with the conduct of her pupils. "They occupy the same seats," she wrote, "stand side by side, in their classes, behaving in all respects as I would have them towards each other."¹⁷

Much as they might have wanted to, however, many Southerners would not avail themselves of the limited educational opportunities the Yankees offered them. In her travels throughout the South, Sarah Chase found that Southern parents wished their children had the advantages enjoyed by blacks, but they "usually would rather they'd die than go to school with the Niggers or they said: I never will get so low as to have my children learnin with nigs." When white parents sent their children to school with blacks the social pressure and condemnation they encountered sometimes led to their children's withdrawal from the school. Elizabeth Hyde Botume had such an experience on the South Carolina Sea Islands. Two little white

girls were attending her all-black school but were withdrawn by their mother after two months, even though they were doing well and seemed very happy. When Botume paid a visit to their mother she confessed that the whites in the community had "made so much fuss" about it that she felt she had to withdraw her children from the school.

Wrote Botume:

. . . She regretted this, for the children played all the time with their colored companions. They had been brought up with them, but must grow up in ignorance rather than to be allowed to study with them.

"I would not care myself, but the young men laugh at my husband. They tell him he must be pretty far gone and low down when he sends his children to a 'nigger school.' That makes him mad, and he is vexed with me," said the mother sadly.¹⁸

The Northerners met with more, if still limited, success in establishing separate schools for whites in such cities as Raleigh, Richmond, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg. In Atlanta, the AFUC employed five teachers and taught over 500 white pupils. General Davis Tillson, assistant commissioner for Georgia, believed that the Atlanta school was a great success and contributed "toward removing the prejudice of the people against colored schools." In Richmond, the AFUC school for indigent whites had 375 pupils and 5 teachers, and another building was underway for 7 additional classes, an industrial school, and a public reading room. From all reports, Richmond's lower and middle classes supported the effort. The Petersburg and Fredericksburg schools for white- were also successful, with 80 and

150 pupils respectively.¹⁹

Teacher Laura Towne and some of her fellow Northerners opposed these efforts, however. Towne disagreed with her organization's policy, convinced that inevitably the schools for whites would be taken over and run by white Southerners who would not teach "Northern principles or history, or loyalty to the Government." S. J. Whiton of the AMA was furious at the new policy. He felt that the AMA was being hypocritical by officially claiming that its schools were nonexclusionary yet starting a policy whereby black students would not be allowed in white schools. Eventually Whiton resigned over this issue. He wrote that he could not condone a policy "very much like what the pro-slavery leaders used to say to the abolitionists, 'Don't agitate the matter; keep still and it will come out right.' But they did agitate, or slavery would have been in existence today." "In all good conscience," continued Whiton, "I cannot in any way sanction discrimination on account of color in schools or churches."²⁰

Even the successful Yankee attempts to assuage Southern white hostility in this way did not completely resolve the problem. Harassment of teachers remained part of their daily lives. Like Eunice Congdon, many teachers relied on their faith in God to protect themselves and give them strength. Despite constant rumors and threats of violence, Congdon reported, she and her fellow teachers

had "settled down into a state of composure, trusting that we shall be taken care of by Him who inclined our hearts to this work." In Norfolk, Mrs. J. N. Coan responded similarly to white harassment by concentrating on the thought that "those who trust in the Lord shall be kept in perfect peace."²¹

Religion, however, usually offered inadequate protection, so many teachers looked to the Northern army, Northern laws, or the Freedmen's Bureau for aid. The bureau received many pleas for help, especially from teachers in rural areas. For example, Jennie E. Howard from Stanardsville, Virginia, wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau that her situation was "very unpleasant." According to Howard, the teachers in Stanardsville lived in "daily fear of some open demonstration on the part of the citizens. The family with whom we board are continually harassed--have been warned to 'rid themselves of us as soon as possible.' There is a meeting today of the citizens to see what course shall be taken to deprive us of the school-house. We are insulted on the street and remarks like these are publicly made, they 'have fought against the government once, and would do so again if they had a chance--would fight the Yankees here if they had an opportunity." Howard told the bureau that while the teachers wanted to finish out the term, they could not do so unless they had some protection.²²

Some teachers fought back. Jane Welsh would yell insults back to whites in Augusta, but this response did not endear her to the AMA, which censored her aggressive and unladylike behavior. Miss Clift used her political clout to bring recalcitrant southerners into line. When she was harassed and kept up all night by the "Southern Civalry" of Oxford, North Carolina, Clift went into action. She wrote the following account to her sponsoring society in the North:

My reception in Oxford . . . was neither flattering nor agreeable. We made no trouble about it, but very quietly remarked that when our reports went to New York and were sent to Washington, the statement of their conduct would be no particular assistance in getting them a representative in Congress. This touched them in a tender spot, as they are very anxious for that. Esquire Paschell, who is a noble Union-man, and has always shown no fear to stand for the right anywhere and is a resident of this place, wrote to Col. Whittlesey about the matter. The people found it out before he mailed the letter, and said, 'No, we will make it all right here.' So they wrote a very handsome apology and presented it to us with the signature of thirty of the most respected citizens of the place.²³

Throughout Reconstruction, many Southerners claimed that they objected not to educating blacks but to the Yankee schoolmarms and their radical ideology. Indeed, Southern newspapers such as the Meridian Messenger argued that it was better for Southern whites than Yankees to teach them. The Messenger claimed that it was not disreputable for Southerners to teach blacks until they were competent enough to produce their own teachers. Southern teachers, it argued, should be encouraged because "a

Southern teacher would instill into the young, southern ideas of the relative social relations, right and duties of the races." And if Southern whites were not allowed to teach, Yankees would proceed to instill hatred toward all Southern whites. Other papers argued that since there was no disgrace in teaching the heathens in Asia or Africa there should be none in teaching blacks in the United States.²⁴

Some historians, such as Alan Conway, have accepted the view that Southern whites resisted Yankee teachers but not education for blacks. To test this claims we must look at how Southerners who taught the freedmen were regarded and treated by their Southern contemporaries. Many of the Southerners who did respond to the call to teach the freedmen were women in difficult economic circumstances: single women forced to earn their own livelihood, widows with children to support, married women with incapacitated husbands. For example, freedmen's teacher Mrs. Belle Cheney of Newborn, North Carolina, had an invalid husband and a large family to support. Minerva Guthrie of Thomasville, Georgia, was forty years old and single when she applied for the job. And teacher Jane Head had an incapacitated husband and five small children to support. Although G. L. Eberhardt, Freedmen's Bureau superintendent for Georgia, also received applications from Southern ministers, physicians, lawyers, and editors who wanted to teach, he

believed that most of these professionals did not apply "from any love of the work but to ward off starvation."²⁵

Many of the Southern freedmen's teachers appeared to have believed in educating the blacks even before the war. Some had Northern backgrounds or Unionist sympathies. For example, Mrs. M. E. Pinckard from Butler, Georgia, claimed to be "reared and educated in the most refined parts of the state of Georgia." She said that before the war she had wanted to see the blacks educated "and did all in my power to have them so when under my control and wondered that everybody did not have the same views about the matter." Belle Cheney believed that the blacks "should have been educated years ago while in slavery but . . . it was almost a crime to teach a negro to spell or read." Minerva Guthrie, although a long-time resident of Georgia, had been born in the North. She was the first to open a school for blacks in Thomasville. Fannie Randell, who applied to become a freedmen's teacher from Newman, Georgia, wrote that she had been educated in Utica and Troy, New York, and had taught in Utica until 1832 when she moved to Georgia for her health.²⁶

Whatever their motivations, the southern freedmen's teachers were not well treated by their contemporaries. The Georgia Freedmen's Bureau reported that while white mobs harassed, threatened, and insulted all teachers, the teachers who received the worst treatment were Southern

widows in isolated areas.²⁷

Many of the Southern teachers suffered further economic hardships due to their decision to teach the blacks. Julia Wilson's decision to give up her trade as a seamstress to teach the freedmen brought down the "censure of the community" upon her. While she could not earn enough to support herself as a teacher, neither could she return to her former job. Ellen Ellis was a dressmaker in Richmond, but her customers were so offended when she began to teach blacks how to sew that they stopped using her.²⁸

Even when local whites had encouraged a Southern woman to teach blacks rather than let a Yankee do it, the teacher was not assured continued moral or financial support. Mrs. D. Swope wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau from Lithonia, Georgia:

Since I have commenced teaching the Freedmen's schools, I have observed a marked coldness towards myself and a very manifest effort has been evinced to influence the colored people against me. My oldest and best friends give me the cold shoulder, albeit before I commenced, they gave me personally their sanction and expressed their decided affirmation of my undertaking the task.

Miss Brim of Dawson and Mrs. Brimen of Davison, Georgia, had the support of their local "prominent citizens" but found themselves still impoverished and ostracized by others in the community. Brimen in particular felt betrayed because she had been induced by the town's most prominent citizens to open the school for the freedmen. Yet she had received no salary and had "injured [her] capacity in

taking other schools, and standing in the high estimation of the community. . . ."29

This social ostracism was most difficult to bear. Mrs. Pinckard wrote that she was not so upset about her own ruined social life but despaired for her fourteen-year-old daughter, who could not go to Sabbath school "or any gathering whatever, without being insulted by some of these . . . backwards ignoramuses." Belle Cheney's decision to become a freedmen's teacher had not earned her any laurels. She told Freedmen's Bureau officials, "there is no one about this settlement but that consider it a disgrace to teach a negro school but I am of the opinion that persons often disgrace their professions but no profession ever disgraces persons (that is an honest profession)." Julia Wilson wrote from Talbotton, Georgia, "I was amongst the very first ladies in Georgia who engaged in the instruction of the colored people in this state which rendered me odious in the eyes of many people. . . ." Similarly, Mrs. H. A. Hart wrote that since she had become a freedmen's teacher "the whites anathematize me" and that "the white rebs, round me, are so displeased with my teaching the colored people, that they consider it beneath them to associate with me."³⁰

Thus, the white Southerners may have claimed that they did not oppose education for blacks but only the Yankee schoolmarms, but their treatment of Southern freed-

men's teachers proved otherwise. Southern as well as Northern schoolmarms suffered in their hands. Teachers were harassed, threatened, and ostracized. To survive as a freedmen's teacher one had to be persistent, tough, and courageous, or very dedicated to the cause. In some respects the situation may have been hardest on the Southern teachers, who were ostracized in their own communities. The Notherners could at least turn for support to the small enclaves of Northerners living in the South. Conditions were somewhat better in cities and towns where the freedmen's aid societies established teachers' and mission homes. These networks of residences functioned as harbors in an otherwise turbulent ocean.

NOTES

- ¹American Missionary (January 1864), pp. 7, 8.
- ²Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Amongst the Contrabands (New York: Arno Press, 1968), p. 116; Richard L. Morton, ed., "Contrabands and Quakers in the Virginia Peninsula, 1862-1869," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 61 (October, 1953), pp. 419-29; Hattie Foote to AMA, 2 July 1866, American Missionary Association, MSS; Mrs. M. E. T. Smith to Samuel Hunt, 18 January 1865, AMA MSS; Freedmen's Friend (July 1866), p. 108.
- ³Reported in the American Missionary (July 1867), pp. 151, 152.
- ⁴Mary Ames, A New England Woman's Diary in Dixie in 1865 (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1906, 1969), p. 123; National Freedman (April 1866), p. 117.
- ⁵Martha Schotfield's Diary, Martha Schofield MSS, University of North Carolina, Southern Historical Collection, p. 36; Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education for Georgia, 1865-1870, Emma Tabor to Mr. Spilman, 7 January 1870.
- ⁶United States. 42 Congress, 2 Session, Senate Report No. 41, part 7. Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire Into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, Georgia, Vol. 11, 1872, p. 838.
- ⁷Botume, p. 231.
- ⁸American Missionary (March 1866), p. 45.
- ⁹Sarah Champney to E. P. Smith, December 1, 1868, AMA, MSS; American Missionary (April 1863), p. 87; Anna Gardner to R. M. Manly, 25 September 1868, Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education for Virginia.
- ¹⁰Anna Gardner, Harvest Gleanings (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1881), p. 39; American Freedman (April 1867), p. 205; G. L. Eberhardt to Major General D. Tillson, 18 January 1867, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Annie Jones to Freedmen's Bureau, 18 April 1870, Freedmen's Bureau, Georgia.

¹¹Freedmen's Record (January 1866), p. 25; Jane Welch to Freedmen's Bureau, 8 October 1869, Freedmen's Bureau, Georgia.

¹²American Freedman (July 1867), p. 267; Gardner, p. 27; George Bentley, A History of the Freedmen's Bureau (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955), pp. 176-180; American Freedman (April 1867), p. 203.

¹³National Freedman (March 1866), p. 118; Freedmen's Bureau, Georgia, Records of the Assistant Commissioner, Report for 1866; Freedmen's Bureau, Education Division, Report by G. L. Eberhardt from Georgia, September, 1867; William White to Freedmen's Bureau, June 4, 1867, Freedmen's Bureau, Georgia; Douglas Aisley to Brig. General Sibley, August 31, 1867, Freedmen's Bureau, Georgia.

¹⁴Jacqueline Jones, Soldiers of Light and Love (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 52.

¹⁵William White to Freedmen's Bureau, May 27, 1867, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Mary Vauleer to Freedmen's Bureau, April 27, 1868, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Margaret Paine to Freedmen's Bureau, December 10, 1869, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Sarah Champney to E. P. Smith, December 1, 1868, AMA, MSS; Freedmen's Record (May 1868), p. 81.

¹⁶American Freedman (August 1866), p. 67.

¹⁷Ibid; Freedman's Record (April 1866), p. 67.

¹⁸Henry L. Swint, ed., Dear Ones at Home (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), p. 202; Botume, pp. 257, 258.

¹⁹American Freedman (August 1866), pp. 70; ibid., p. 74; American Freedman (October 1866), p. 99.

²⁰American Freedman (August 1866), p. 74; S. J. Whiton to Smith, 16 February 1868, AMA, MSS.

²¹Freedman's Friend (July 1866), p. 108; American Freedman, January 1864), p. 8.

²²Jennie E. Howard to Rev. R. M. Manly, 15 June 1866, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education, Virginia.

²³W. P. Russell to S. Hunt, 15 May 1866, AMA, MSS; G. L. Eberhardt to S. Hunt, 4 June 1866, AMA, MSS; National Freedman (May 1866).

²⁴Reported in the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin, (July 1866), p. 5; Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia, G. L. Eberhardt, Report on the Georgia Schools, 15 October 1866. (Records of the Assistant Commissioner for Georgia 1865-1869).

²⁵Mrs. Belle Cheney to A. S. Ware, September 1, 1867, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; William White to Major J. R. Lewis, August 13, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Jane Head to Major J. R. Lewis, August 12, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; G. L. Eberhardt, school report, September 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Education Division.

²⁶Mrs. M. E. Pinckard to Major J. R. Lewis, August 15, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Belle Cheney to E. A. Ware, September 22, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; William White to Major J. R. Lewis, August 13, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Fannie Randell to Freedman's Bureau, August 3, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia.

²⁷G. L. Eberhardt, Report on the Georgia Schools, October 15, 1866, Freedman's Bureau, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Georgia, 1865-1869.

²⁸Julia Wilson to E. A. Ware, 29 October 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Julia Wilson to E. A. Ware, 17 January 1868, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Freedman's Record (Mary 1867), p. 106.

²⁹Fannie Randell to Freedman's Bureau, August 3, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Mrs. Brimen to Freedman's Bureau, June 29, 1869; Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Miss Brim to Freedman's Bureau, December, 1869, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia.

³⁰Mrs. M. E. Pinckard to Major J. R. Lewis, 15 August 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Belle Cheney to A. S. Ware, September 1, 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Julia Wilson to E. A. Ware, 29 October 1867, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia; Mrs. H. A. Hart to Freedman's Bureau, 16 May 1870, Freedman's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia.

CHAPTER IV

GIDEON'S BAND AT HOME IN THE SOUTH

As the movement to educate the freedmen progressed during Reconstruction, its main efforts increasingly centered on Southern cities. There, teachers and administrators encountered special problems and challenges in their living and working arrangements. The Northerners found that it was difficult to secure housing or school buildings in communities where hostile whites owned most of the property. On plantations teachers and freedmen lived and worked in close proximity, but the more impersonal urban environment made contact between the two groups difficult. Generally shunned by the white community, with minimal social contacts in the black one, the Northerners were forced to fall back on their own resources. They came up with the idea of establishing their own Teachers or Mission homes.

After the war, the AFUC polled its officials in the South on the appropriate type of housing for the teachers. It sent questionnaires to all assistant commissioners and bureau superintendents, to state superintendents in the employ of the Executive Committee, and to superintendents of schools. In a synopsis of their answers, AFUC General

Secretary Lyman Abbott noted that most respondents favored the establishment of a separate home for the teachers "where there are a sufficient number of teachers to render that course economical." But, they warned, there would be problems in taking that course of action. First, the teachers would have to procure a building, obtain furniture, and hire a housekeeper or a matron, all of which would be difficult. The very existence of such a house might further separate the teachers from the Southern community and perpetuate the distance between them. Furthermore, wrote one respondent, the teachers were "not always congenial to each other. And the maintenance of homes [has] been found by experience to be accompanied by a danger of not only disagreeable associations, but of positive and open feuds."¹

Nevertheless, the respondents also felt that teachers' homes would by their example influence Southern society outside of the schoolroom and "by tact . . . introduce . . . elements of Northern housekeeping. . . ." Students would be able to visit the teachers in their homes, whereas in a boarding house run by Southern whites this would be impossible. Also, a teachers' home was cheaper than individual private board, and the teachers would have more control over the fare. Even more important, "the concentration of teachers [was] needed for their own social enjoyment, if not, indeed for their own protection

from positive insults." But this entire discussion might be spurious, pointed out one respondent, because Southerners had proved so hostile that, except in a very few places, teachers were excluded from the best boarding houses.²

The report proved to be prophetic. The homes, set up by both secular and nonsecular societies, did provide the teachers with safe living conditions. They also served as social centers, providing the Northerners with a support network. The homes offered the teachers a place to spend their leisure hours after a generally grueling work day. Living together were people with similar backgrounds and shared current interests. Teachers took their meals together, read to one another in the evenings, held common prayer meetings, and on occasion visited teachers at other mission homes. Strong friendships were formed as a result of this intense and intimate experience, sentiments which came to the surface when the relationships were threatened. Such was the case when the AMA proposed to transfer Helen Leonard out of the Columbus, Georgia, home. Her friend Evelyn Plummer immediately wrote to the AMA explaining, "The chief solace and comfort that the teachers find here, in their isolation, is in each others society; so a separation after an attachment has been formed is a double calamity."³

But while the homes provided a community of peers for the freedmen's aid workers and a buffer against hostile

whites, they also proved to be breeding grounds for dissension. The ideal Yankee schoolmarm was supposed to be a strong, self-reliant person, temperate in behavior and willing to follow orders. But there were contradictions inherent in this ideal construct. A strong, independent woman willing to brave the hardships of life in the South was not likely to acquiesce in following orders with which she disagreed. The position of women within the AMA exacerbated these tensions. The AMA believed in a hierarchical ordering of authority, with white males at the top serving as officials and superintendents in the field. There, they would supervise a corps of white women teachers and black assistant teachers.

A minority of women protested the position of women in general within the freedmen's aid societies, pointing to their lower salaries and lack of authority. In 1870 The Women's Journal, a Boston feminist paper, ran an article on the subject. The author claimed to be a freedmen's teacher in Atlanta, where the women teachers, she reported, were among the "first in the class of graduates at Oberlin, Rutgers Female, and Mount Holyoke." But she thought the men were mostly second or third rate, many coming to the South for their health, not for the cause. While the women's salaries did not exceed \$15 per month, the men received \$30 a month. And she pointed to one case in which a man earning \$20 assisted a woman teacher who

earned only \$15. The next year he was commissioned as a superintendent at \$40 per month! "But," claimed the author, "the greatest injustice is done in placing these men over the women as superintendents to arrange, or rather dis-arrange their work. In fact, the task assigned the men is to watch the women and report as to their faithfulness, notwithstanding the officers of the Society own that the women are in many instances superior to the men who are over them." The rationalization given for paying the women less, wrote the author, was that a larger number of women were willing to offer their services at that price. But she believed the reason so many women were willing to come was "because they are more self-sacrificing, [and] have a more devoted missionary spirit."⁴

The secular Boston group was quick to answer the charges. J. H. Chapin wrote to the Journal that the New England Freedman's Aid Society had the "uniform policy . . . to make no distinction between men and women in the matter of wages." Sometimes they had to hire men for "chaotic conditions in the South which women could not fulfill, but only secured those of "tact and experience." "At the same time," she claimed, "there [had] been no hesitancy in advancing women to positions of important trust with corresponding wages. . . ." The 1867-68 Commission Book of the New York branch of the AFUC listed sixteen women and only eight men as superintendents or principals. While

this open policy toward promoting women was generally true for the AFUC as a whole, the AMA advanced women to the position of superintendent only reluctantly, when it could not find a man for the job.⁵

The freedmen's aid societies preferred to send women south who could pay their own way and not have to accept a salary. In most cases, however, the women depended on a salary, although many were subsidized by money and gifts from home. The teachers who were totally responsible for earning their own livelihoods found it very difficult to make ends meet, let alone to save any money on their salaries. Many of the teachers' letters expressed anxiety over their financial situations. In 1865, Miss Haskill wrote to the AMA from Wilmington, North Carolina, that she was upset that she had had to work so hard for the ten weeks previous to the other teachers' arrival. "If I get sick," she wrote, "I have no home to go to as most of the teachers have. . . ." A South Carolina teacher expressed similar concern for her future:

I sometimes feel that the salary I am receiving is a smaller one than I ought to try to live upon. I have been teaching laboriously most of the time for 16 years. Salary has always been a secondary consideration and at an age of active life somewhat advanced, and with health and vigor nothing to what they once were, I am nearly without means, my salary affording a bare support. In case of failing health or inability to continue teaching, there is literally no one upon whom I have any natural claim. Many of the teachers who have double the salary receive much material aid from home. . . . I find too that it is much easier soliciting for my work than for myself.⁶

To supplement their regular salaries, some teachers tried to use their skills during the summer. Abbie Johnson tried to make Cravath of the AMA understand why it was so important for many teachers to be able to stay in the South over the summer. She wrote that "some desire to stay on account of not having a home ready for them, and also to increase their funds, as you know their salaries are small."⁷

Some AMA teachers' protested their treatment throughout Reconstruction. After she returned home to Livonia Station, New York, Amy Williams wrote an irate letter to the AMA about its treatment of women. Williams, who had taught in Atlanta, was furious about the discrepancy in salaries of men and women. She claimed that "the great disparity between salaries and privileges of the men and women in the work is enough to arouse the indignation of any woman who has one particle of spirit or sense of justice about her." And lest the AMA think that hers was just an isolated opinion, she ended her letter with the statement, "I complain or feel no more intensely than almost every teacher you have in the field, all the difference being that I go to headquarters with my grievances instead of to my co-workers."⁸

Williams's complaints notwithstanding, the majority of teachers apparently accepted the arrangements in teachers' homes, where superintendents and matrons were supposed to

provide a family atmosphere. The AMA even referred to its mission homes as families. When male superintendents failed to offer the guidance and paternal protection that was part of their role, however, the teachers did not hesitate to organize against them. Nine teachers living in Wilmington, North Carolina, for example, sent a petition to the AMA asking for the removal of Superintendent Longley. They felt he treated the freedmen so badly that it was but "one remove from their former relations to their masters." The teachers also questioned Longley's ability to make correct decisions involving their teaching schedules and claimed he was unjust and insulting toward them--generally unfit to be in charge of a home. Teachers in Winnsboro, South Carolina, also protested the way their superintendent, Mr. Francisco, treated them and their servants. They reported that "with no provocation [he] seized, dragged and belabored [the] servant." When the matron, Miss Denton, tried to prevent him from hurling their servant girl down the stairs, she "received a heavy blow from the shovel or tongs on her arm. . . ." These teachers told Mr. Neide of the AMA, "We are not willing to submit to such insults from one sent to protect us."⁹

One of the most bitter protests against a superintendent arose in Augusta over the rule of a twenty-three-year-old man named Dewitt C. Jencks. In December, 1865, Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent G. L. Eberhardt, who took

his meals at the AMA's Augusta mission home, reported to the AMA that Jencks was "totally unfit to have charge of a mission--to control others. He is young and inexperienced in the world; and is so arbitrary and exacting, and withal so uncouth, in his conduct towards the ladies under his charge, that their position is insufferable; and if they are not soon relieved of his authority, I greatly fear they will quit the work entirely." One of the problems was that Jencks tried to dictate to the teachers what they would be allowed to eat. Eberhardt wrote that one night a surgeon who also lived at the home bought some oysters for the women, which they cooked outside of the regular mealtime. "Thereupon he [Jencks] would allow no cooking or eating between meals; and that they must eat only what he provides!" Eberhardt thought that someone "older, wiser and more prudent" was needed for the job. Another resident of the home, Mr. Martindale, confirmed Eberhardt's report. Martindale believed that Jencks lacked qualities that would make him a "good manager and a gentleman and if the reports about him were correct his behavior towards the teachers partakes . . . of the character of a slave holder." Although Jencks apologized to the teachers for his "unchristian conduct," Eberhardt relieved him of his position as superintendent in January 1866.¹⁰

The teachers were pleased with Jencks's replace-

ment, Mr. William P. Russell, a missionary. Teacher Hattie Dowd reported that "his kind words and cheering face is ever ready to help us and we all feel to thank you many times for sending so true a Christian among us." Mrs. Smith also felt that Russell was a good man and wrote to AMA headquarters that "I cannot feel thankful enough to think that you have sent us one to whom we can go for advice, with so much pleasure."¹¹

Sometimes the struggle for power within mission homes focused on religious disagreements. This was the case in Savannah when Mr. and Mrs. Sharp were appointed superintendent and matron of the AMA mission home there. When the Sharps arrived in 1869, they found that Cornelia Drake, a teacher who had been there since 1865, had control of the house and intended to keep it. Helen Sharp wrote to the AMA office that a struggle was going on between Miss Drake and Mr. Sharp over religion. Mr. Sharp had accused Drake of being "a regular Puritan" inclined "to the rigid side of religion," while Sharp, who had been educated at Yale, had "freer notions of things." Because of these differences in religious beliefs, Mr. Sharp had been trying to hold separate prayer meetings, but, wrote his wife, this was not working out because "Miss Drake likes to rule. Mr. Sharp doesn't like to be ruled [and] has an idea that everybody has a right to their own affairs." Apparently the Sharps lost the battle and left the South in June of

the same year they arrived.

Women seldom had the upper hand in AMA mission homes, however, simply because the AMA in the main refused to put females in positions of power. This situation proved frustrating to ambitious women like Julia Shearman, who arrived at the AMA's Augusta home in 1867. Assigned as a teacher, she soon exhibited her organizing abilities and ambitious plans. In February, Shearman was ameliorating the teachers' numerous complaints about their living conditions: she bought them each a feather pillow to replace the uncomfortable husk ones, and she purchased a chair. She also tried to arrange for transportation to take the teachers the considerable distance to and from school.¹³

Shearman also lost no time in demanding a superior position of authority from AMA headquarters. In her letters to the AMA she pinned her arguments on two points. First, she insisted on the incompetence of the present male leadership. She observed that the superintendent of education was a weak man, not in tune with the teachers' needs. Not content to stop there, she launched a full-scale attack on G. L. Eberhardt, Freedmen's Bureau superintendent for Georgia, whom she accused of being a meddling "half a man," "too small for his boots." Finally, she wrote to Gen. O. O. Howard asking for Eberhardt's removal. "I do think, woman as I am," she wrote, "I could fill the post better than he, should pity myself if I couldn't, and at

any rate I would be honest of this I am quite sure, I could influence the colored people more effectively than he."¹⁴

Shearman's second line of argument was that women would function better than men in positions of authority over other women. In February 1868, she wrote to AMA officer George Whipple of her disappointment in not having been made a superintendent. She asserted that her talents were being wasted because she was a woman: "You say that women will not be guided by women--perhaps not, but they are not very willing to be guided by men. In how many of your mission families are there no heart burnings between Superintendent and teachers." She would be a good superintendent, she told Whipple, because she was a woman and hence understood other women. "I know how much they can do and bear and could minister to their comfort and so gain their goodwill and cooperation which is far better than submission." But apparently Shearman's long-sought-after promotion never came, and she continued to attack those around her to relieve her frustrations.¹⁵

The teachers' social and sexual behavior gave rise to the most emotionally charged conflicts in their homes. The AMA, with its strict Victorian standards of morality, was intolerant of any perceived deviation from what it defined as proper behavior. But acceptable or reprehensible behavior was not clearly defined and the charges brought against women ranged from too-frivolous demeanor to

illicit sexual liaisons. Several AMA mission homes were shaken by such charges, causing considerable tensions between the organization and its teachers. Many women were either unwilling to accept the AMA's definition of evil-doing or the validity of the charges brought against them or their friends.

Trouble began for Miss Minor on the boat trip south. S. W. Magill of the AMA wrote to headquarters from Savannah that some of the other women on board the boat with Minor were "grieved at her playing cards very constantly with officers of only casual acquaintance." She justified her actions by claiming to have played cards quite regularly in her father's house. Although Minor was a very good teacher, Magill became dissatisfied with her when she "became fascinated by officers, some of whom she had met on shipboard," others of whom she had met in Savannah. She even went to the theater with an officer she had met only a few days before. Magill reported that he had spoken to her about her behavior, and "she professes to feel that she acted inappropriately and will not do so again." A few months later, Magill claimed that Miss Minor had reformed and had given up seeing officers, but nonetheless after summer vacation he thought the AMA should not rehire her.¹⁶

Teachers charged with such wrongdoing often vehemently protested. In 1866 Miss Morgan wrote an angry

letter to the AMA from her post in Wilmington, North Carolina. She was disturbed over accusations made against her and threatened to quit and return to the North where she had previously taught. Morgan objected to being told that the AMA was "a little disappointed at the want of serious earnestness in my appearance, and some remarks were made that Miss Morgan did not seem much like a missionary." She thought the judgment was ridiculous, hastily made by a few men who had met her for a few minutes at AMA headquarters but not even talked to her. She did plead guilty, however, to going to the theater once in New York, but she claimed she did not like it and would never go again.¹⁷

The AMA's Augusta home was wracked by some of the most serious and extended scandals. However, it had faced numerous problems before the scandals broke out: conflicts between superintendents and teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and mounting hostility towards the teachers by the white community. In May 1866, Mr. W. P. Russell wrote to the AMA that the social isolation and hostility the teachers were encountering from Southern whites was creating too much of a strain. "The teachers are shut out from the society and sympathy of the white citizens," he wrote, "and are often jeered at, as Yankee Nigger teachers. . . ." By July, teacher Hattie Foote thought that relations with the Southern whites had deteriorated further, and she

claimed that the whites were treating the teachers with "perfect hatred,"¹⁸

As in other problems between the AMA and its teachers, the seeds of the Augusta scandal were planted in informal reports written by superintendents about their teachers. The AMA encouraged such reports, and sometimes more than one person in each home would write in about the others. Eberhardt's June 1866 report praised Miss Dowd and Mrs. Smith as model teachers but was very critical of Hattie Foote. Foote, claimed Eberhardt:

teaches a tolerable school, but she is given (perhaps innocently) to too much levity--a levity that amounts sometimes to foolishness. . . . She is, however, quite fond of the society of gentlemen and is quite impressionable--has not quite mind enough of her own so that she is easily influenced by those who have no sympathy with the work of elevating the freedmen and thus her usefulness has been greatly injured. Our chief surgeon has a room in the mission house, and, thro' his influence over her, she has become quite lukewarm, and performs her duty, as it appears to me, merely to rid herself of her obligations to the society, and not thro' any real interest she feels in her vocation.¹⁹

Having received Eberhardt's account, the AMA leadership was prepared to believe a report by an unnamed person that Hattie Foot and Chief Surgeon Louis Lawton were engaging in "criminal intimacy." And when Foote became ill, Samuel Hunt of the AMA wrote to her friend and fellow teacher Susan Hosmer to ask if Foote's illness might not be the fruits of that intimacy. Hosmer wrote back defending her friend, "I am grieved and astonished that anyone who knows her especially her friends should wrong her by such

suspicion. In that respect she is above suspicion. I never saw a more pure minded girl more than that she has the love of Christ in her heart." Hosmer had been Foote's roommate all winter and knew her well: "She is very joyous and light hearted and full of life and animation, which has made it pleasant for me," wrote Hosmer, "as I am more inclined to look on the dark side of life." Hosmer was even more grieved for her friend because Foote had learned of these accusations through her pupils.²⁰

Dr. Lawton also wrote to the AMA offices to protest the various rumors he heard were being spread about him and Miss Foote, whom he believed was "very unjustly accused, and . . . the victim of . . . persecution and jealousy." Lawton had heard that he had been accused of being a "libertine," "profain" and "intoxicated," and he demanded to know who his accuser was.²¹

Eberhardt regretted his initial report and felt bound to write to Hunt to clear Foote's name. He told Hunt that even though Foote "entertained a friendly regard for Sargent Lawton," Lawton would never do anything to "mar the purity of her character." Eberhardt hoped that the AMA would continue to employ Foote as a teacher but transfer her and Hosmer to Savannah, Atlanta, or Macon, although he asked Hunt not to mention this to the women directly. While he was sorry for the scandal, however, Eberhardt smugly ended one of his letters with "The mental

agony she (Foote) had endured within the past few months I doubt not have taught her a severe lesson and one that will prove very useful and beneficial to her."²²

Hattie Foote was not the only teacher in Augusta about whom there were bad reports in the fall and winter of 1866. Another teacher who had arrived that year, Miss Welch, was criticized by several men in authority for her too-strident abolitionist sentiments and her anger toward Southern whites. Although the superintendent, Mr. Russell, felt she was a very good teacher, he wrote that Welch was "very decided, speaks plainly and sometimes harshly, especially against rebels. In this way she sometimes injures the feelings of her associates, and, in my judgment prevents some good that she otherwise might bring about."²³

Eberhardt, who was also critical of Welch, was most upset by "her disposition to do and say very unnecessary things on the public streets and thus incur the ridicule of the white people. . . . For a white Northern lady here to kiss a colored child is very imprudent to say the least of it, and in reply to an insulting remark made by a white person, to say that the negroes are as good as that white person, is entirely unnecessary." Eberhardt was also furious that Welch had insulted General Tillson, a man not generally known for strong abolitionist opinions. At a picnic given by the colored people she had approached Tillson and asked in a loud tone, "What business he had there?" Because she inflamed the Southern whites, Eber-

hardt thought she should be recalled. She did not return to Augusta as an AMA teacher the next fall.²⁴

AMA women were required to hold their aggressive and sexual impulses in check, and indeed were harassed or dismissed when they failed to uphold the AMA's norms of proper behavior. But the AMA ideal also created excesses of zeal, bordering on martyrdom. Some women pursued the AMA's prescriptions of self-denial and hard work to such an extreme that their health was endangered. For example, even though the AMA wanted Abbie Case to return north for a summer vacation, she insisted that she must stay in Savannah to continue her duties. Case told the AMA that she felt compelled to work for the cause until ill health stopped her. In one of her numerous reports on other teachers, Julia Shearman told the AMA that Miss Mary Jane Armstrong, who taught in Savannah,

was fantastic except for one serious fault. She is unreasonably excessive in labor, almost to a monomania--exposes her health, neglects food and rest, makes those in charge uncomfortable on her account and refuses to yield to advice. . . . She is homeless and almost friendless, was educated at the Home of the Friendless, New York, and when she comes North goes there and works Hard all the time of her so called vacation.

In April 1868, Superintendent Dimick wrote to Smith that he had to dismiss Armstrong because of her insubordination and her refusal to carry out his orders. She told him that she would stay in Savannah anyway and open up a private school. But two months later Dimick wrote that Armstrong

had died. The obituaries of several other teachers mentioned fatal illnesses (usually of the respiratory tract) brought on or made worse by nervous exhaustion and over-work.²⁵

Aside from these conflicts over the proper place and behavior of women teachers, the question of race was a source of disagreement among members of the freedmen's aid movement. While the reformers were united in their desire to elevate blacks through education, there was little unanimity of opinion or policy on the question of the social equality of the races.

As in the question of placing women in positions of authority, the secular societies tended to be more egalitarian in their social relations with blacks. Mulatto Charlotte Forten, an educated Northern teacher, apparently lived harmoniously and on a basis of equality with white teachers on a St. Helena plantation during the war. And when NEFAS Teachers' Committee members Ednah Cheney and Lucretia Crocker toured their Southern schools in 1869, they pointedly invited Mr. Haynes, a black teacher, to dine with them at their boarding house, even though this gesture resulted in their expulsion from the home.²⁶

Although some teachers lived with black families, this in itself did not imply social equality. For example, Elizabeth Pennock lived with the Burgesses, a black family, in North Carolina. Uncle Albert Burgess, his

wife, and his daughter, lived in a rented house, part of which they in turn rented to Pennock and a fellow teacher. The Burgesses were employed as the teachers' servants: Albert as their "man of all work," his wife as their cook, and his daughter as the second girl. The teachers paid them board and wages. Pennock wrote home that "we yet number amongst our acquaintances more maids than their mistresses, more valets than their masters." Still, they did not turn to the blacks for social companionship or think of them as equals. Pennock noted that the Burgesses were very thoughtful in this area: "A separate table was always provided for us," she wrote, "and our host and hostess stood and waited on us; we were never annoyed by the slightest attempt at social equality."²⁷

There was often conflict in the teachers' homes over the racial beliefs of the residents. In Norfolk, Virginia, teacher Mary Reed expressed her unwillingness to live with black teachers at the home. In wanting to live with whites, the blacks, she felt "overstepped their bounds." A few months later Miss Daffin, a black Northern teacher, wrote complaining about her living situation in Norfolk. As a black teacher she felt uncomfortable in the mission house and asked Superintendent Woodbury to improve the situation.²⁸

Two years later, in 1866, Miss Daffin had been transferred to Wilmington and was planning to move there,

but Reverend Ashley of Wilmington wrote to the AMA asking that Daffin's orders be cancelled. She would not consent, he said, to board with a colored family, "and I fear that her sensitive nature would be wounded if she boarded in the mission family." Ashley claimed that if it were up to him, he would tell her to come, but that he could not ignore the views of the others. When Miss Daffin had been in Wilmington the previous summer, the other teachers had "wounded her feelings" although, he said, they had not meant to. More colored teachers were needed in the South, continued Ashley, but "it does not seem to me to be wise to send them in company, and to board in company with white teachers. There are very few places at the North where it would be wise to do this. Such a course at the South brings your white teachers in such sharp contact with the prejudices of the Southern people that their [the teachers] situation is made almost intolerable." Ashley did believe there should be social equality in other aspects of the mission homes, however. It was just that in the living situation, separate quarters were "a matter of expediency and not of principle or right."²⁹

Not all of the Wilmington teachers accepted Ashley's view. Martha Kellogg wrote to the AMA about the situation:

I am told by Mr. Ashley that his policy has been non association with the colored people on the same social terms of our white friends. Such as receiving them to the parlor, at our table and walking with them, that he is committed to this policy and prefers that the family adhere to it.

Kellogg, who wanted to transfer because of this, wrote, "I desire not to be identified with any policy that ignores or repudiates social equality and I desire to be where I can act freely in the matter, according to conscience and the gospel idea to treat the colored people as I should whites in the same circumstances."³⁰

The AFUC also had some disputes in its Columbus teachers' home over the issue of race. In 1867, Ednah Cheney wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau that teachers in Columbus "do not seem to act in harmony and we have mutual complaints--we are told of some of them that they do not use the colored people well. This is the worst fault in our eyes."³¹

Teachers were divided, too, on the question of social equality between races at the AMA's Savannah home. Matron Helen Sharp wrote that they had made a mistake taking Capt. and Mrs. Hoag as boarders. When an AMA teacher from Brunswick, a black man named Jones, was invited to stay for dinner, the Hoags felt very abused and gained the sympathy of two of the teachers, Miss Huntoon and Miss Dolson. But another teacher, Miss Foote, went to Mr. Sharp and offered to sit next to Mr. Jones. Finally, the Sharps told the Hoags that they were out of place in the home and that their rooms would be needed for teachers who came and went.³²

The conflicts over sexual and racial equality cited

above show that the freedmen's aid movement was not immune to the prevailing attitudes of its day. But the movement was not monolithic, and the organizations within it had diverse policies. The American Missionary Association, which of all the Northern societies came to have the greatest impact on black education in the South, represented the values of reform-minded evangelicals. On the whole, evangelical protestantism supported traditional family values and a subordinate, domestic role for women. At the same time, in such evangelically dominated schools as Oberlin and Mount Holyoke, women were encouraged to become teachers and missionaries to the heathen. This missionary spirit, combined with the AMA's commitment to abolition, allowed the organization to recruit many eager, well educated young women as freedmen's teachers. Consistent with its traditional views on the position of women, the AMA generally denied these women positions of authority as either administrators or superintendents in the field. Thus, contradictions arose among the women's high level of education, their ability to take care of themselves under difficult circumstances, the respect accorded them by the blacks, and their subordinate position within the AMA hierarchy. Some women, Julia Shearman for example, were frustrated by the AMA's refusal to offer women leadership positions and responded by attacking the men in power around them. Other women collectively rebelled against

abusive or incompetent male administrators or protested what they considered to be infringements on or unfair criticisms of their social freedom. The majority of AMA teachers, however, at least outwardly accepted the existing situation.

Women in the American Freedmen's Union Commission, especially in its more liberal New England and Pennsylvania branches, were in a better position. Many AFUC administrators (especially those on the Teachers' Committees) came out of the Garrisonian fold. Teachers' Committee members Ednah Cheney, Hannah Stevenson, and Lucretia Crocker, for instance, believed in women's rights and made efforts to give their freedmen's teachers equal pay and access to leadership roles.

The teachers' home was the arena where conflicts flared. It was also where teachers went for friendship and support. The homes offered the Northerners a place to live among people like themselves and a haven from the pervasive hostility they encountered. But their isolation caused conflicts that became magnified when all other social outlets were curtailed. Many of these conflicts had to do with sex and race. While the Yankee reformers were dedicating their lives to elevating the freedmen, the politics of sex and race smoldered beneath the surface, sometimes emerged, and would not go away.

NOTES

- ¹American Freedman (August 1866), pp. 67-79.
- ²Ibid.
- ³Helen Leonard to Mrs. Pond, 19 December 1867, American Missionary Association, MSS. (second part of letter from Evelyn Plummer).
- ⁴The Woman's Journal (8 January 1870).
- ⁵The Woman's Journal (5 February 1870); American Freedmen's Union Commission, New York Branch, Commission Book, 1867-1868, Cornell University Anti-Slavery Collection; Jacqueline Jones, "The 'Great Opportunity': Northern Teachers and the Georgia Freedmen, 1867-73" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1976), p. 308.
- ⁶Lucy Haskill to George Whipple, 30 December 1865, AMA, MSS; Anna Carter to Simeon Jacelyn, 12 June 1864, AMA, MSS.
- ⁷Abbie Johnson to E. M. Cravath, 12 May 1871, AMA, MSS.
- ⁸Amy Williams to E. M. Cravath, 29 July 1872, AMA, MSS.
- ⁹Petition to AMA, 30 June 1865, AMA, MSS; Kate Gilfilian, Anna Denton, Laura Holden to Mr. Neide. 8 June 1869, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for South Carolina.
- ¹⁰G. L. Eberhardt to Samuel Hunt, 20 December 1865, AMA, MSS; Mr. Martindale to Samuel Hunt, 21 December 1865, AMA, MSS; Miss Welch to AMA, February 1866, AMA, MSS.
- ¹¹H. W. Dowd to AMA, 31 March 1866, AMA, MSS; Mrs. M. E. F. Smith to AMA, 31 March 1866, AMA, MSS.
- ¹²Helen Sharp to AMA, 7 May 1869, AMA, MSS; Jones, "The 'Great Opportunity,'" pp. 307, 308.
- ¹³Julia Shearman to E. P. Smith, 19 February 1867, AMA, MSS.

¹⁴ Julia Shearman to W. E. Whiting, 6 February 1867, AMA, MSS; Julia Shearman to E. P. Smith, 23 April 1867, AMA, MSS; Julia Shearman to AMA, 1 July 1867, AMA, MSS.

¹⁵ Julia Shearman to George Whipple, 24 February 1868, AMA, MSS.

¹⁶ S. W. Magill to AMA, 5 April 1865, AMA, MSS; S. W. Magill to AMA, April 21, 1865, AMA, MSS.

¹⁷ Miss Morgan to Samuel Hunt, 29 February 1866, AMA, MSS.

¹⁸ William P. Russell to AMA, 3 May 1866, AMA, MSS; Miss Hattie Foote, July 2, 1866, AMA, MSS.

¹⁹ G. L. Eberhardt to Samuel Hunt, 4 June 1866, AMA, MSS.

²⁰ Susan Hosner to Samuel Hunt, 26 August 1866, AMA, MSS.

²¹ Louis Lawton to Samuel Hunt, 1 September 1866, AMA, MSS.

²² G. L. Eberhardt to Samuel Hunt, 11 September 1866, AMA, MSS; G. L. Eberhardt to Samuel Hunt, 22 September 1866, AMA, MSS.

²³ William P. Russell to AMA, 15 May 1866, AMA, MSS; American Missionary (April 1867), p. 75.

²⁵ Abbie Case to Samuel Hunt, 27 July 1866, AMA, MSS; Julia Shearman to AMA, 13 October 1867, AMA, MSS; O. W. Dimick to E. P. Smith, 13 April 1868, AMA, MSS; O. W. Dimick to E. P. Smith, 15 June 1868, AMA, MSS; American Missionary (August 1864), p. 191.

²⁶ Ednah Dow Cheney, Reminiscences of Ednah Dow Cheney (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1902), p. 91.

²⁷ Richard L. Morton, ed., "A Yankee Teacher in North Carolina," by Margaret Newbold Thorpe, The North Carolina Historical Review, 30 (October, 1953), pp. 569, 578.

²⁸ Sing-Nan Fen, "Notes on the Education of Negroes at Norfolk and Portsmouth, Virginia, During the Civil War," Phylon The Atlanta University of Race and Culture, Second Quarter (Summer, 1967), p. 205.

²⁹ Reverend Ashly to Samuel Hunt, 22 January 1866, AMA, MSS.

³⁰Martha Kellogg to George Whipple, 17 December 1866, AMA, MSS.

³¹Freedmen's Bureau, Records of the Superintendent of Education for Georgia, Ednah Cheney to E. A. Ware, 22 November 1867.

³²Helen Sharp to E. P. Smith, 17 May 1869, AMA, MSS.

CHAPTER V

"TELL THEM WE ARE RISING"

The effort to educate the freedmen was the first large-scale literacy drive in the United States outside of the establishment of common school systems in the North. It brought together Yankee administrators and teachers, the freedmen, and the Freedman's Bureau, an agency of the federal government. These three partners contributed funds and supplies, time, and energy to satisfy the Southern blacks' hunger for education. The Northerners' glowing reports on the successes of the movement belied the struggles and hardships that were also a part of it. The truth is that the educational effort was seriously hampered by inadequate and overcrowded school buildings and classrooms, vast cultural differences between teachers and pupils, insufficient funds, and an impoverished student body, many of whom could attend school only sporadically while earning a meager living. Complete harmony among the participants was also marred by conflicts over who would control black education, the Northern reformers or the freedmen themselves. These difficulties, however, only put into relief the successes of the movement through which the freedmen

expressed their longing to rise to their fullest stature as free people.

Education, especially the ability to read and write, was something the ex-slaves wanted badly. In the wake of white hysteria caused by the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831, Southern legislatures had passed laws forbidding the teaching of reading and writing to blacks. The illegality of these skills made them seem even more desirable. To the slaves, knowledge truly represented power.

Laws prohibiting the education of blacks were never completely effective. It has been estimated that between 5 and 10 percent of slaves achieved literacy before the war. Most of these blacks lived in cities, where educational opportunities in clandestine schools were greater and there was less supervision than on the plantations. Literate blacks could be found, however, in most areas. On plantations some mistresses taught their favorite slaves to read and write, and white children sometimes disregarded the law to teach their black friends. Several blacks, for example, at Fortress Monroe who could read told Edward Pierce that they had been taught on the sly by white playmates.¹

Other teachers also heard stories of blacks who had struggled to learn to read and write under slavery, often risking their own safety to do so. Margaret Thorpe had one such pupil, an old man in her night school. He walked six

miles to get there and Thorpe was touched by his determination. Often he would say, wrote Thorpe, "Isn't this a most blessed privilege? Many a time I have been whipped for being found with a book, for I always wanted to learn to read." Teacher Helen Dodd heard a similar story. At a house Dodd stopped at near Beaufort, South Carolina, she noticed that the father of the family quickly hid something when she entered. When she told him who she was, he took out an old spelling book and told her that he was not afraid of her but was so used to hiding such things that he could not get over it.²

Many of these literate or semi-literate freedmen taught other blacks what they knew. Sometimes this learning was on a very basic level. For example, Laura Towne reported that a black woman named Lettie taught on Edisto Island. One day she brought some of her pupils to the Northerners' school at the Baptist Church, telling the teachers there that she "could carry them no further." She could read words of one syllable. When Edward Pierce visited the Sea Islands in 1863, he found a number of older blacks teaching. Among these were Ned, whom Pierce estimated to be between 40 and 45 years old, and Uncle Cyrus, a man of 70. These two men gathered 150 children into two schools and taught them for five months until the benevolent societies provided Northern teachers for them.³

Some of the blacks educated before the war had

received a more sophisticated education. Ednah Cheney was delighted with the excellent mulatto teachers she encountered on her trip south. Many of these teachers had been free mulattoes living in Charleston before the war. They had all attended school, noted Cheney, and had had superior educational advantages, matched only, perhaps, in Louisiana.⁴

Not only were the freedmen eager to share their knowledge, but adults and children alike were willing to make numerous sacrifices in order to obtain an education. Ella Roper wrote from Newbern, North Carolina that "nothing seems to diminish their eagerness to learn, in many cases, nothing to satisfy it, and a scrap of an old book, or a single leaf, is treasured as sacredly as a mien's gold." Some adults attending Roper's school were taking two or three months off from work for the purpose of "getting an education." In Raleigh, North Carolina, Miss Graves observed a not unusual phenomenon when one of her pupils walked four miles to school. He stayed home three days a week and lent his shoes to his sister so that she could attend school on the other days. A number of Cornelia Hancock's students walked five miles back and forth to school, and other poor pupils were boarded by their parents in the village so that they could attend.⁵

At the beginning of the educational effort, some teachers reported that the blacks attributed an almost religious and mystical meaning to book learning and to the

power of the word. Teacher Harriet Ware came across a remarkable funeral scene on the Sea Islands shortly after schools began there:

As we drew near to the grave we heard all the children singing their A,B,C, through and through again, as they stood waiting round the grave for the rest to assemble and for Uncle Sam to begin. Each child had his school-book or picture-book Mr. G. had given him in his hand,--another proof that they consider their lessons as in some sort religious exercise.

It is difficult to gauge just how important the religious element was in the black's conception of and desire for education. Certainly we cannot take the ritualistic behavior of children cited above to be representative of adult beliefs. Yet it is true that many older blacks said they wanted to learn how to read so that they could read the Bible. Sarah Beals, for example, was especially proud of her "aged class." "I have five now in spectacles and turbans," she wrote. "It has been more of a pleasure than I can express to go with these old women over the precious truths of the Bible. I never can forget the tears that rolled down their faces as they read with their own lips of the Savior's sufferings and death."⁶

Many teachers were surprised at the freedmen's unquenchable thirst for education and speculated as to the reasons behind it. Teacher Anna Gardner believed that because the freedmen were "human, and partaking of the same nature as the Anglo-Saxon race, the effect upon them is the same that it would be upon us, were some withholden

privilege, which has been longed for for centuries, suddenly accorded to us." Elizabeth Hyde Botume, whose observations were always insightful, thought the freedmen had very practical reasons for wanting to become literate. "They had profound respect for education," she wrote, "and felt that if they could read they would come nearer to the white race, and could better compete with them. . . ." Certainly the freedmen knew that with knowledge came power. The ability to read alone would enable them to understand contracts and might serve as a safeguard against fraud.⁷

The blacks demonstrated their determination to be educated by raising money for the effort. Although the freedmen emerged from slavery owning little, the black community managed to contribute substantial sums toward the education of its members. For example, in South Carolina the American Freedmen estimated that blacks had contributed \$17,200 toward their own education in 1866. The following year, the AFUC reported that the freedmen helped pay for at least half of the society's schools. Some 15,000 pupils paid tuition, amounting to about \$11,400 per month.⁸

The Northern reformers believed that the freedmen would get more out of their education if they helped pay for it. "In truth," wrote Ednah Cheney of the NEFAS, "the most important lesson to the colored people is to require them to help themselves." The AMA also came to

believe that when the freedmen paid for their education they valued it more, especially the older students. One missionary wrote to AMA headquarters expressing this widely held view. "Generally, also those study best who pay tuition. The deadhead system is pernicious. Schools for children may perhaps be free, but for men and women who earn wages a paid system, strictly adhered to, helps to educate."⁹

The Northerners tried to help blacks contribute financially to the schools in two ways. The first was to aid them in forming educational associations. The second was to collect a monthly tax or fee from each student. Teacher Minnie A. Hill, for example, organized a meeting of blacks in Petersburg, Virginia, for the purpose of buying a school building in Pocahontas. She left word at every house in Pocahontas that she wanted to see every black man at her schoolroom on Thursday night on a matter of great importance to all of them. On the night of the meeting the room was filled to capacity. She told them of her plan to erect a schoolhouse, and she stressed the benefits that would come to them and to their children after them. "In brief," said Hill, "I talked the whole thing up in the best I knew how." After her talk she asked each man for his opinion of the undertaking and then put the question to them, "All who are in favor of buying a building spot in Pocahontas for school purposes, manifest it by rising.

Every man in the house was on his feet almost before I had the words out of my mouth. I then took the name of every man present. Some pledged themselves for \$20, some \$10, some \$5, and so on. I soon found I could raise the money, not all at once, but by installments. . . ." She planned to meet with the women the following week and follow the same procedure.¹⁰

Teachers sometimes helped the blacks run their own meetings and taught them the accepted Northern procedures for conducting such meetings. Sarah Champney assisted the blacks in Newton, Georgia, in running meetings of their educational association, even while she made fun of their procedural ignorance. After arriving at one meeting, Champney wrote, she waited and waited for it to begin. When Miss R., another teacher, asked the leader why he did not start, he said he was waiting for brother George to come to start a tune. Finally George arrived and began to sing "Why do we mourn departing friends." Wrote Champney, "I laughed out loud it was so ludicrous; finally the President got up and made a speech but did not call the meeting to order; as he did not know how to do anything only as we told him, it was amusing to us. A brother offered prayer and he prayed loud and long for the teachers. . . ." The teachers gave him instructions for the next meeting about the inappropriateness of singing at business meetings, but he still insisted on singing "just one verse." Con-

tinued Champney: "As I am secretary I sit on one side and Miss R. the other of the president and as practice makes perfect; so by constantly telling him, he can now put a vote very respectably."¹¹

In many instances the freedmen contributed money to support their schools and teachers. Typical of these were the freedmen of Pulaskie County, Virginia, who raised money to cover their teachers' board, lodging, fuel, and light. The teachers' sponsoring society, the Pennsylvania branch of the AFUC, reported that it had no problems collecting the money. The society wrote that the freedmen "feel it their duty as well as a privilege to assist all in their power, in the education of themselves and children."¹²

In some cases, however, blacks found that they could not afford to pay what they had promised. When this occurred teachers wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau and the freedmen's aid societies for relief. Many of these unpaid teachers were Southern white women who had made arrangements with the freedmen to teach, subject to the approval of the Freedmen's Bureau. For example, Mrs. Pinkard, a Southern woman, wrote to the Freedmen's Bureau that she was near starvation and the blacks were refusing to pay for her services. She bitterly claimed that "some will spend half a dollar on Saturday nights for spirits instead of paying me. This takes the music out of the matter considerably. There is no poetry in that kind of gratitude."

Fannie Maxwell found her Lexington, Georgia, school in financial difficulties when the blacks could not pay her:

When I opened the school the first of Jan. I only had 5 or 6 pupils the number began to increase . . . until I had about 50 pupils the majority of them commencing in alphabet. After the first month the number began to decrease finding themselves unable to pay their tuition there are a great many that would attend if they were able to pay but the number that is able to pay is so small that they scarcely pay my expenses if I was able I would teach them free of charge that is those unable to pay. My expenses for rent of room, firewood and candles is \$14 per month you can see from my reports the school pays very little over that amount. The school is sustained entirely by freedmen.¹³

These financial difficulties were not confined to teachers of Southern origin: some teachers sponsored by the Northern freedmen's aid societies ran into similar problems. Catherine E. Hall warned the Society of Friends, which sponsored her, that "It is useless to ask even the colored here to contribute anything towards the support of their school; for they cannot pay for the house. . . . They are very poor and easily discouraged." Miss Anderson, a teacher sponsored by the New York branch of the AFUC, also had trouble getting the freedmen to pay for her board. Administrator Josephine Shaw Lowell wrote to Virginia Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent Manly asking him to intercede on behalf of Anderson. Lowell suggested that Manly "tell the people to have her board with each family as the New England teachers do."¹⁴

When the freedmen paid for their teachers, they became more critical of their performance. Although in

the majority of cases teachers and freedmen appeared to form close attachments to one another which often ripened into respect, some freedmen were displeased with the teachers sent to them and requested others. For instance, the freedmen in Americus, Georgia, were dissatisfied with their teacher, Mrs. Christian. They complained that her health was bad and that she did not keep up her school regularly. But more importantly, the blacks did not "admire her sentiments," they requested that the Freedmen's Bureau send another teacher. Some black communities wanted only genuine Yankee teachers: Mr. W. L. Clark, assistant superintendent of schools in Georgia for the Freedmen's Bureau, wrote to the bureau that the teacher in Tomesville, Georgia, "once a Northern woman, had been trying to get together a school without success." "I think," wrote Clark, "the freedmen have not entire confidence in her . . . all would much rather go to the genuine Yankee teachers."¹⁵

Although the Northern societies encouraged, even demanded, that the freedmen contribute to their schools, they became uncomfortable when the blacks actually sought to exercise control. This was especially true of the AMA, as illustrated by its confrontation with the Savannah Educational Association. In December 1864, a meeting was held in Savannah to organize schools for the black populace. Secretary Stanton and General Sherman attended, as did several AMA officials and about ten leading black ministers

of Savannah. At the meeting the Savannah Educational Association was formed and \$730 collected. In the days that followed, the blacks of Savannah enthusiastically began to organize schools. This did not sit well with most of the AMA leadership, who thought that the new association had too much power. It could now hire teachers, pay them, and control school buildings. Worst of all, it expected the AMA to assist it, to work under it, and to contribute money.

When the Educational Association ran into financial difficulties shortly thereafter, the AMA did not hesitate to retake control. The Reverend L. W. Magill, general superintendent of Savannah schools for the AMA, and Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent for Georgia G. L. Eberhardt worked out a plan for the AMA to take control over the Savannah school system. On January 2, 1866, Eberhardt instructed the AMA's Professor E. A. Cooley to reorganize the freedmen's schools in the city. "The Colored Educational Board," Eberhardt wrote to Cooley, "if it continues will be recognized as auxiliary only and all their official acts must be subject to your approval." All of Savannah's teachers would be employed by the AMA in the future.¹⁶

Such conflicts between the freedmen and the Northern societies were uncommon because few black communities had the resources to challenge the Northerners' dominance. In most places the freedmen and their teachers were too busy

overcoming other obstacles. In the early days of the freedmen's aid effort, teachers and students had to put up with very primitive conditions. Since the South did not have a common school system before the war, there were few available school buildings. Consequently, freedmen's schools were held in almost every conceivable place: cabins, gin houses, churches, meeting houses, parlors, hospitals, or piazzas, or, if there were no buildings to be had, out in the open under a tree. Elizabeth Hyde Botume described her first school on the South Carolina Sea Islands as a "rough wooden building standing on palmeto posts two or three feet from the ground, with an open piazza on one side." Lucy Chase on Craney Island and Anna Gardner in Charlottesville both taught their students in barracks. Mary Ames's school on Edisto Island was a former billiard room. And Miss S., another Edisto teacher, taught her pupils in what had been a kitchen.¹⁷

Richard Wright, a student in one of these schools, remembered the dilapidated surroundings. The first school he attended in Cuthbert, Georgia, had only one of its sides covered. About 20 x 30 feet, it had ten or twelve rough, backless benches. The school was packed tight as a sardine box with students ranging in age from six to seventy. Wright's next school was an abandoned boxcar in Atlanta. Years later, when he was the principal of his own school, he reminisced that "Wherever some Yankee lady was lucky

enough to get the framework of a school house, she nailed up an old army blanket, or the like, to the windy side of the house and taught as if she were in one of our modern school houses."¹⁸

In cities as well as countryside, teachers taught in a variety of buildings, often unsuited to school purposes. In Beaufort, South Carolina, during the war, Maria King taught from house to house before securing use of the Methodist Church there. A hospital served teachers as a schoolhouse in Columbus, Georgia. Ironically, one of the buildings used for a school in Savannah had been part of Bryan's Slave Mart--a three-story brick structure containing two large rooms on the second and third floors. The upper story had grated windows where slaves had once been confined, to be bought and sold.¹⁹

Buildings not constructed specifically for school purposes presented their occupants with a variety of problems. In Columbus, Georgia, one teacher reported that "The churches are not really fit places; and besides, we are subject to the whims of the people. The maps must be taken down every week, and the writing table and blackboard are often moved out of doors, and left out during the night. The blackboards used at the Methodist Church last year are destroyed by being carried out and left exposed to the weather and vagabonds." Makeshift schools, which left teachers and students to the mercy of the elements, often

endangered their health. Teaching in a plantation gin house led Ellen Addington to complain about cracks in the walls and the lack of a chimney. It was impossible to keep warm, she wrote, and when the weather changed the children would cry from the cold. When the wind was blowing in the right direction they could make a fire, but if it was not, smoke filled the room and they had to open the doors and windows. Annie Waldrons asked Col. J. W. Jordan of the Freedmen's Bureau for money to build a schoolhouse in Halifax, Virginia, where she was teaching. She was holding classes in a basement, she told him, which became flooded and muddy every time it rained. She felt it was like teaching in a "stable."²⁰

Overcrowding in the schools was a serious problem. When Maria King began teaching in the Beaufort Methodist Church she found that "The Principal preserves order while the four assistants hear the classes at the same time in the corners of the room,--making as a natural consequence a good deal of confusion. . . ." Clara Dean was frustrated with the overcrowded conditions at her school in Farmville, Virginia, where she shared the building with the local hospital. In only one small room she taught 150 pupils who came faithfully every day and alternately had to sit or stand. When Laura Towne began teaching on St. Helena Island, the whole class recited together, and often all three departments had classes reciting at once in the same room.²¹

Many of the Yankee schoolmarms did not accept this situation passively but tried to correct it by facilitating the building of permanent school buildings after the war. Often this involved complicated negotiations involving the freedmen, the Northern freedmen's aid society that sponsored the teacher, and the Freedmen's Bureau--which contributed to the construction of new schoolhouses under the budgetary guise of "repairs."

These schoolmarms showed remarkable organizational skills and persistence in the face of many difficulties. When Emily Hubbard, superintendent of the New York branch of the AFUC, arrived in Petersburg, Virginia, in 1866, she discovered the building she had been planning to use as a school was occupied. Although she was tempted to give up and return to the North, Hubbard persisted and wrote to Major Stone of the Freedmen's Bureau for help. Then she went to see the Rev. Mr. Williams, pastor of the black church, about using the church for a school. He turned her down, saying that the church had decided not to rent out any of its buildings for school purposes because they might then be burned down, as many already had been. But Hubbard persevered and her enthusiasm apparently had positive results. She presented the matter before the entire black congregation at a church meeting, and they immediately resolved to build a school. The Corning, New York, society, which served as her patron to the AFUC,

followed her triumph with intense interest and concluded that she was a heroine "of this pioneer work of civilization."²²

The following year, the New York society built a normal school in Richmond, Virginia. The brick building contained two stories: the first had two schoolrooms, the second a small room and a large lecture room. Emulating this successful effort, Anna Gardner of the New England branch of the AFUC carried out a similar plan in Charlottesville, Virginia. On September 25, 1868, she wrote to Rev. Manly of the Freedmen's Bureau that the building of a schoolhouse had been the "acme of our hopes for a year or more." She and her colleagues had finally acquired the necessary land after an enormous struggle "through the obstacles interposed by the white inhabitants, whose persistent determination that we should not purchase a site within the corporation of Charlottesville at length proved unavailing." She, Miss Carkin, and Mrs. Gibbons had purchased the land "mostly from the proceeds of our exhibitions and the sale of clothing sent from the North." Gardner wanted to know if the Freedmen's Bureau "would be willing to make a liberal offer to a committee of colored gentlemen of this city, provided they would pledge themselves to assume the entire responsibility of putting up the building. . . ."²³

By July 1869, the deal had been put together. The

New England society contributed \$300, the Freedmen's Bureau \$800, the teachers had raised \$300, and the freedmen had directly contributed \$200--\$1,600 in all. Ednah Cheney of the society's Teacher's Committee was nervous that the plans be carried out correctly and that the money not be squandered. She warned Gardner that "We must have . . . good judgment and energy in putting up the building. We think the Trustees ought to see to it, and see that the contract is honestly carried out." Cheney also told Gardner that she liked her plans for the building, which included four small rooms for the teachers to live in. Cheney further suggested that the plan should include the ability to turn two of the classrooms into one large room for meetings, recitations, and special occasions.²⁴

Finally, in the November 1969 issue of the Freedmen's Record, the dedication of the new school building at Charlottesville was reported. The Rev. R. M. Manly presided. A poem by Mrs. Howe was recited by a pupil and an original ode by Anna Gardner, the woman who had made the new school possible, was read.²⁵

The following year Martha Schofield also arranged for the building of a school in Aiken, South Carolina. Local whites were making it difficult for her to erect the school building, even on land that she had purchased. But, she wrote to Freedmen's Bureau Superintendent Deane, "I cannot let the matter rest. You know-we-Quakers-sometimes

see what it is right for us to do--and do not quite-give-up--although we meet with difficulties." Schofield wrote directly to general O. O. Howard asking for an appropriation of \$1,000 to build a schoolhouse. Apparently she received at least part of that sum, because she wrote to Deane thanking him for his help getting the funds from the Bureau.²⁶

After teaching in churches and other small rooms that were "improperly constructed and furnished," Schofield thought carefully about the school she was now about to build. She wanted at least two good-sized rooms to teach in, with walls thick enough so that teachers could not hear everything going on in the next room. "No doubt an architect would make fun of the plan," she wrote, "but I measured our rooms here and these desks and made all calculations accordingly, and have set my hopes on having it built to accommodate all."²⁷

In addition to inadequate school houses, the teachers also faced and surmounted the problems of teaching students who generally had had little or no preparation before entering school. To be effective in their work, many teachers had to break through cultural and language barriers. Miss M. D. Ayers, an AMA missionary stationed outside of Albany, Georgia, had some difficulty communicating with her pupils there. She found that "even the simplest school phrases and orders [were] not comprehended,

not so much that their capacity is inferior, but the form of expression is new, as they must learn the use of words before the simplest lessons can be understood."²⁸

Teachers on the Sea Islands had an especially difficult time understanding the Gullah dialect of their students. During her first days at school, Elizabeth Hyde Botume reported:

My head grew dizzy trying to understand the dialect of these people. I was hopelessly confused in regard to their family relations, and I never knew whether they were talking of boys or girls. They spoke of all as "him."

Botume watched as her new young assistant Fannie made the same wrong assumptions in her first days of teaching. "Miss Fannie," wrote Botume, "had come fresh from school, full of zeal, and with many theories for the advancement of the contrabands. But this was an unexplored field, requiring a line of action not mapped in any book. All attempts at precise order and orthodox discipline quenched the ardor of her pupils and set their wits astray."

"Attention, children," said she; and they stared hopelessly at her, and not an answer could she get to any question. I saw her color rise, and a look of intense weariness come over her before the morning's work was done.

"They are hopelessly stupid!" she exclaimed, as we started on our homeward walk. "How have you endured this so long?"

"Wait a little, and see. Don't expect too much of them or of yourself," was my answer.

The next day was not much better; but she became encouraged.

"To-morrow I shall begin over again. I see we do not understand each other," she said. After that she had everything her own way. It was charming to see the welcome all gave her. The brightness of youth is very attractive to these universal children, who never seem to grow old.²⁹

Students had to be trained in the rudiments of school decorum and in the use of basic implements before they could begin to learn any lessons. Laura Towne described her students on St. Helena Island as "unbroken colts--full of spirit and life. Kindly disposed, eager to do right or what they were wanted to do--but so entirely unused to restraint or mental application that before they could be taught much of books they had to be trained to school habits--broken in." Angelina Ball found a similar situation when she confronted her class in Norfolk, Virginia, for the first time. She wrote, "The first day, upon entering school, I found my scholars wild and turbulent; they seemed to have but little idea of what was expected of them in school; were perfectly restless, and free to sing, talk or whistle, as the impulse of the moment dictated. . . ."30

Not surprisingly, the teachers and their benevolent societies engaged in a dialogue over how to achieve and maintain discipline in the classroom. All were united in disapproving of corporal punishment. The Pennsylvania branch of the AFUC believed that the use of physical punishment could be regarded as "evidence of incompetency in the teacher." And it demanded that every time such punishment took place it be recorded in the teacher's monthly report, with good reasons for its use.³¹

The teachers used a variety of tactics to keep

order in their classrooms. Laura Towne believed in stringent rules that were always enforced. Before the students committed their offense, they always knew what the punishment would be. For fighting, wrote Towne, "confinement in a comfortable closet is inflicted and a case is of the rarest occurrence." For other "school derilections [sic]," students were detained after school hours, or asked to write a fixed amount depending on the crime. As a last resort, students would be expelled. This happened in very few instances, but when it did, it was for "untamable violence of character which made them dangerous to school fellows," for irregular attendance, or for "neglect of school-privileges." AMA teacher Miss M. E. Hanson thought that the rod was ineffectual in disciplining black youngsters because it had been used so much under slavery. "We punish most effectually," she wrote, "by dismissing the offender from school for a day for the first offense, for a week for the second, and with a final expulsion for the rest of the term for a third. I have not had any final expulsion."³²

Many teachers believed in using positive reinforcement rather than physical punishment to achieve their educational goals. This philosophy reflected the ideas of progressive Northern educators, who were themselves moving away from the rod as a means of maintaining order. Under slavery, the freedmen had been induced to work through fear

and punishment; now, however, they had to be motivated by rewards for work well done. Articles in the Freedmen's Record supported this philosophy. The teachers were expected to maintain a firm but loving hand in the classroom. Instead of corporal punishment, the journal wrote, AFUC teachers should try to develop an esprit de corps in the school by "having good surroundings in the school-room, and by self-discipline in the teacher." Teacher Anna Gardner expressed the opinion of the majority of AFUC teachers when she wrote that "affection for the teacher should be a large element in discipline. . . ." Not all teachers were models of self control. Miss Welch, for example, reportedly controlled her students through fear and indulged in throwing rulers at their heads. Such cases, however, seemed to be rare.³³

Given the crowded conditions that prevailed in many classrooms during and right after the war and the problems teachers had in socializing young pupils in classroom decorum, it is not surprising that some teachers found their older students to be more rewarding. For example, Miss M. R. Babbitt wrote to the AMA, "The satisfaction I derive from my night class, compensates me for the drudgery of the day school. I have a class of men very appreciative of my efforts in their behalf, eager to learn, and who improve and avail themselves of every means within their reach to do so." Teacher Anna Wilkins was also pleased

with her evening school. "I often think," she wrote, "when I see them looking so intently on their books all the evening, that I should not feel much like study if I had been hard at work all day as I knew they had."³⁴

During the early years of the freedmen's educational movement, large classes and overcrowded classrooms in the cities and forts were the norm. Students of different ages and abilities were often taught in the same room. The situation was difficult for the teachers as well as for their pupils. As many teachers, Julia Shearman found the experience to be "drudgery." "To rule 170 children with the stick, making them sit still with nothing to do for four to five hours, while I drudge through a recitation with a class of 20 is a style of teaching that will never suit me," she wrote to the AMA.³⁵

To remedy this situation, the benevolent societies instructed their teachers during Reconstruction to grade their schools. For example, the Pennsylvania branch of the AFUC assigned one teacher in each locality as head teacher and called for each school to be divided into three grades: advanced, intermediate, and primary. The other secular societies and the AMA also graded their larger schools according to the pupils' ability.³⁶

With smaller and more homogeneous classes, the teachers began to institute the latest Northern pedagogical techniques and materials. In fact, the teachers' goal was

to make the freedmen's schools as much like those in the North as possible. In general, they followed the current Northern curricula, teaching writing, spelling, reading, grammar, arithmetic, geography, and history. Although some books were especially written for the Southern freedmen's schools--Lydia Maria Child's The Freedmen's Book, for example, provided biographies of outstanding black people--most of the texts used were standard Northern fare. These included McGuffey's Reader, Webster's Speller, and Greenleaf's Arithmetic.

Progressive educators in the North were dispensing with rote learning, substituting instead a philosophy that relied on the cultivation and utilization of the students' own powers of discovery and reasoning in the learning process. These educators also believed in bringing the child's senses into the learning experience through the use of "object lessons" and illustrative materials such as charts, maps, and globes. The freedmen's teachers tried to use these pedagogical techniques on their own students. For example, teacher Anna Carter wrote to her superiors that she taught the freedmen by the object method, using colored blocks and charts. She considered color to be one of the earliest perceptions to be developed. But unlike children in the North, the freedmen she taught "cultivate[d] no flowers, and none are near their dwellings. All taste of this kind seems to be crushed out of them. But those

little ones since they have taken these lessons go about gathering every flower they can find and often besiege my door with their hands full. . . ." Anna Gardner also used object lessons and charts to teach her students. The most important lesson she wanted them to learn was that "there is a cause for everything, . . . they must try to trace the cause from the effect, and vice versa."³⁷

Historians disagree as to whether the Northern teachers taught political lessons as well as the basics in their classrooms. Henry L. Swint believes the teachers were fanatical abolitionists who insensitively pushed their political ideas on the South. Ronald E. Butchart, on the other hand, has recently maintained that the teachers were religious missionaries, unconcerned with instilling political ideas in their students. According to Butchart, the freedmen's schools if anything were to be faulted for not having been political enough.

Daring to teach the blacks was in itself a political act. It symbolized the South's defeat by striking at the heart of its racial policies. Laws prohibiting blacks from learning to read and write indicated the extent of the threat that black literacy held for ante bellum Southern planters. Southern whites as well as blacks understood that giving blacks an education brought them one step closer to equality. While it is true that the AMA and other nonsecular societies emphasized religious over poli-

tical instruction in the classroom, there is abundant evidence that teachers with abolitionist sympathies gave political instruction and advice to the freedmen both inside and outside the classroom. Political instruction in the freedmen's schools consisted mainly of teaching blacks to be grateful to the North, to the Republican Party, and to Lincoln in particular for setting them free and for providing them with an education.

Lessons in morality were also part of the curriculum. Yankee virtues such as industriousness, punctuality, sobriety, and frugality were continuously stressed. The Northerners assumed that destruction of the institution of slavery had left a vacuum in black social and moral life. Many teachers believed that black culture was a mixture of barbaric African residues and the lessons of slavery. The latter included impoverished living standards, the distortion of family life, and such personality characteristics fostered by slavery as dishonesty and laziness. The Northerners sought to replace what they considered to be negative and nonfunctional norms with Yankee values and customs. In doing so they deeply believed that they were offering blacks a precious gift. Few teachers understood or recognized the positive aspects of black culture. Their message to their pupils was clear: the freedmen were not acceptable as they were; they would have to change. For the small minority of blacks who sought and gained economic

or social mobility, the Yankees' lessons must at least have been informative. For the majority, however, as historian Jacqueline Jones has pointed out, ". . . the moral imperatives of an industrializing society had little relevance . . . --even after the War. The vast majority of freed people . . . were destined to remain unskilled agricultural laborers."³⁸

Despite the condescension and paternalism of the teachers' stance, the freedmen appeared to believe that the teachers had something of value to offer them. They struggled to send their children to school, even if attendance had to be sporadic. Many teachers believed their pupils' progress was impaired by interruptions in their studies due to economic reasons. The Rev. W. T. Briggs complained of this problem in his annual report to the AMA on the freedmen's schools in North Carolina. "If the services of children were required at home," wrote Briggs, "they were detained in the afternoon, and as 'heaps of work' were to be done in most families, the small afternoon attendance greatly reduced the average. . . ." Francis Littlefield found that attendance at her school dropped as children were kept out to "mine de birds" or "mine de chile." Laura Parmelee wrote that many of her pupils had stopped coming to school. "When some of them told me they must stop coming because the cholera had killed hogs I smiled forgetting that bacon is the staff of life in this

country," she wrote.³⁹

School attendance often fluctuated with the planting season. Teacher Helen Hurley found that in March, mild weather led farmers to begin their spring work, "which, I am sorry to say, deprives me of some of my best scholars; still, a few of them pursue their studies in the evenings and come when they are at a loss how to proceed, and on stormy days. . . ." Because of frequent student absences and turnover, some teachers, such as Kate Hall, despaired of lost opportunities. Hall found in Vienna, Virginia, that

. . . if I had been able to keep the same pupils I had when I just came here, they might have amounted to something by this time; but that seems almost impossible. Families will come for a little while and occupy one of the cabins close at hand, so that their children may have a few weeks schooling before they are hired out, or while they have nothing to do. They come and learn to read a little and write a little, and the next thing I know they are gone; father, mother, and all, and somebody else comes to fill their places.⁴⁰

Despite tremendous obstacles, the majority of teachers were optimistic about their students' progress. In fact, nearly all of the teachers' reports and letters emphasized the progress made by pupils who only a short time before had been completely illiterate and had little knowledge of the world outside of their plantations. It appears that most teachers came to believe that their black pupils equaled those they had had in the North in native intelligence, if not in previous advantages. Like many,

veteran teacher Bessey L. Canedy believed, "In every quality that goes to make the intelligent and teachable, as well as the 'docile and affectionate' pupil, these children equal any white children it has ever been my privilege to teach."⁴¹

In 1868 Laura Towne wrote a thoughtful report on the progress she had seen in her St. Helena Island school over the six years of the school's existence. In order to estimate the progress of her students, she believed it was necessary to compare their backgrounds with those of Northern children. In general she thought her black pupils were on a par with Northern students, "though", she wrote, "it is seldom that Northern children have had no training in sitting still, holding their books, listening, and giving attention. Indeed they have generally been taught the alphabet at home. But these island children were mere babes in school. Very few knew their letters, and it was rare to find one who could count correctly up to ten." While Northern children were usually encouraged and helped to learn at home, Towne's St. Helena children, she thought, encountered nothing but drawbacks in their families. She wrote, "the children's greatest hindrance was, and is still the necessity for frequent absence from school to work for a livelihood."⁴²

Nevertheless, Towne saw amazing progress over the six years in her pupils' knowledge of the world. From

"complete ignorance," she reported, they now had:

- a good knowledge of the history of the U.S.
- some idea of physiology
- some idea of natural philosophy
- of grammar
- a thorough acquaintance with the outlines of geography
- facility in using the four rules of arithmetic
- such ease in writing that they can readily give with clearness what they remember of a sermon or address, and some can give it with exactness and method
- a familiar acquaintance with the Bible from reading it daily; they have learned by heart many psalms, proverbs, and portions of the New Testament--in all they know more than 300 verses
- they know the chief points in the Constitution of the U.S., the duties of its higher officers and their out duties as citizens

Towne's school had given instruction to 570 pupils. Although only 51 had attained the level of proficiency cited above, Towne believed that many more had come close.⁴³

After 1867, the aim of the benevolent societies increasingly became that of establishing normal schools to train black teachers. With dwindling funds and the gradual establishment of Southern public school systems, the societies were forced to narrow their field of action. Normal schools seemed like the most important contribution they could make. By 1867, the Pennsylvania branch of the AFUC had already introduced the use of black assistants for the younger pupils, replacing some of the Northern teachers. School Superintendent William Mitchell defended this policy against critics who said that the black teachers were incompetent and inexperienced. The black teachers, Mitchell argued, were chosen from among the brightest pupils

and had had at least some special training in the area of education. The society was also saving money by hiring black teachers. Where Northern teachers received \$20 plus board per month, the black teachers were given \$25 per month but found their own board.⁴⁴

The following year the Freedmen's Record declared that it was the duty of the Northern societies to produce a supply of well-prepared black teachers for the South. The New England society pointed with pride to Charlottesville, where for three years Anna Gardner and Pilema Carkin had been preparing students for a normal school. The New York branch of the AFUC also had plans to establish normal schools in Alexandria, Virginia, New Berne, North Carolina, and Petersburg, Virginia.⁴⁵

After 1868, the AMA also accelerated its efforts to establish normal schools. The first and best known of these was the school at Hampton, Virginia. Founded in 1866, the school officially opened in April 1868 with twenty scholars and two teachers. In June 1870, Hampton was incorporated by the General Assembly of Virginia as the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute. The story of the AMA's role in the establishment of institutions for higher learning for Southern blacks is well known.⁴⁶

Many of the first graduates of these normal schools, however, had a difficult time in securing teaching positions. A typical story was that of Robert, a former pupil of Anna Gardner. Although he had been an excellent student, Robert

could not find anything but the most menial and poorly paid work. Wrote Gardner, "These rebels fully comprehend the fact that knowledge is power and hold its key with a jealous grasp; especially guarding its gate against the graduates of the Normal classes." Gardner reported that several other of her students had decided "to go back into the same menial places they occupied as slaves now that they have sacrificed so much to fit themselves to occupy a higher position." Apparently, R. M. Manly of the Freedmen's Bureau obtained teaching positions for Robert and for another of Gardner's favorite pupils, Mary. Gardner wrote to Manly, "I feel almost as much about sending them out into the wide, wide world as though they were my own children, but I want they should go and learn and take care of themselves and to help their race."⁴⁷

The Yankee schoolmarms were also proud of Augustus Johnson, who was appointed a teacher by the Board of Education in Augusta, Georgia, on April 5, 1870. Johnson surprised them by doing very well on its examination; he was rewarded with a teaching certificate. Johnson had been a pupil of Miss Engleman, a Yankee schoolmar, for several years. He had come a long way during that time and now was ready to assume responsibilities for his own class.⁴⁸

The Northern reformers had done their job well. By 1888 there were 15,000 black teachers in the South. Of these, 13,500 had been trained in schools supported by

Northern benevolence. They were also instrumental in helping to establish Southern public school systems. In several states Northern reformers helped to write the public school legislation passed by Reconstruction state governments. By 1870, all of the Southern states had made some provision for public education. When the Democrats came to power in the South in the mid 1870s on a platform of low taxation, however, many of these public schools, especially those for blacks, did not fare well. Many of the black schools were forced once again to rely on Northern benevolence, especially that of the AMA.⁴⁹

NOTES

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²Richard L. Morton, ed., "Contrabands and Quakers in the Virginia Peninsula, 1862-1869," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, 61 (October 1953), pp. 185, 190; Helen Dodd to AMA, February, 1866, AMA, MSS.

³E. L. Pierce, "The Freedmen at Port Royal," Atlantic Monthly, 12 (September 1863), pp. 305, 307.

⁴Ednah Cheney to Mary, 5 May 1869, Ednah Cheney MSS, Boston Public Library.

⁵American Freedman (May 1867), p. 218; Fifth Annual Report of the Friends' Association of Philadelphia for The Aid and Elevation of the Freedmen, Philadelphia, 1869, p. 9.

⁶Elizabeth Ware Pearson, ed., Letters From Port Royal 1862-1868 (New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 65; Sarah Beals to Samuel Hunt, 1 June 1866, AMA, MSS.

⁷Freedmens Record (January 1866), p. 4; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Amongst the Contrabands (1893; reprint. New York: Arno Press, 1969), p. 221.

⁸American Freedman (September 1867), p. 281; John W. Alvord, 9th Semi-Annual Report, January 1870, pp. 6-7, 9-10.

⁹Ednah Cheney to the Trustees of the Claflin School, 4 July 1869, Ellen Sturgis-Hooper Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; American Missionary (November 1869), p. 255.

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¹⁴Fifth Annual Report of the Friends' Association,
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¹⁵T. G. Steard to Freedmen's Bureau, 25 January
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Education for Georgia.

¹⁶G. L. Eberhardt to E. A. Cooley, 23 December 1865,
Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia.

¹⁷Elizabeth Hyde Botume, First Days Amongst the
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Freedmen's Record (January 1866), p. 7.

¹⁸Richard R. Wright, A Brief Historical Sketch of
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¹⁹Maria King to George Whipple, 22 May 1864, AMA,
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Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia;
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²⁰Leland Harrison to Freedmen's Bureau, 4 February
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²¹Marie King to George Whipple, July 13, 1864, AMA,
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²²American Freedman (October 1866), Report from
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²³American Freedman (October 1867), p. 323; Anna
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Gardner to Rev. R. M. Manly, 6 December 1868, Freedmen's
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²⁴Ednah Cheney to Anna Gardner, 7 July 1869, Ellen Sturgis-Hooper Papers, New England Freedmen's Aid Society, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁵Freedmen's Record (November 1869).

²⁶Martha Schofield to Major Deane, 17 January 1870, 1 February 1870, 15 March, 1870, 21 April 1870, 18 June 1870, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for South Carolina.

²⁷Martha Schofield to Major Deane, 1 June 1870, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for South Carolina.

²⁸American Missionary (February 1869), p. 30.

²⁹Botume, pp. 57, 91.

³⁰Laura Towne, School Report, January 1868, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for South Carolina; Freedmen's Record (January 1865), p. 6.

³¹Freedmen's Record (October 1868), pp. 154, 155.

³²Laura Towne, 1868 School Report; American Missionary (March 1869), p. 55.

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⁴⁰Fifth Annual Report of the Friends' Association of Philadelphia for the Aid and Elevation of the Freedmen, Philadelphia, 1869, pp. 21-24.

⁴¹New England Educational Commission (Boston, 1863).

⁴²Laura Towne, 1868 School Report.

⁴³Ibid.; James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 406. For a description of their experiences with the Yankee teachers, see W. E. Burghardt DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk (Chicago, 1903); Booker T. Washington, Up From Slavery: An Autobiography (New York, 1902).

⁴⁴The Pennsylvania Freedmen's Bulletin (January 1867), p. 6.

⁴⁵Freedmen's Record (December 1868), pp. 187, 188; American Freedman (July 1869), pp. 18, 19.

⁴⁶L. P. Jackson, "The Origin of Hampton Institute," The Journal of Negro History 10 (1925), p. 145.

⁴⁷Anna Gardner to R. M. Manly, 16 January 1870, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Virginia.

⁴⁸Caroline Merrick to Freedmen's Bureau, 5 April 1870, Freedmen's Bureau, Superintendent of Education for Georgia.

⁴⁹Richard B. Drake, "The American Missionary Association and the Southern Negro, 1861-1888" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1957), pp. 186, 189, 192, 193.

EPILOGUE

Viewed by itself, the freedmen's aid movement was a brief experiment, which at its peak, from 1865 to 1870, captured the minds and hearts of Northern reformers. Yet the movement can also be seen as the culmination of a thirty-year struggle to end slavery. Those who had fought the long battle for freedom felt they had a duty to help slavery's victims. The question was, how? Education seemed to be the answer. The Northern reformers conceived of their work as a mission that would combine intellectual instruction with "all the more important and fundamental lessons of civilization--voluntary industry, self-reliance, frugality, forethought, honesty and truthfulness cleanliness and order." They believed, perhaps naively, that through education the freedmen would be able to enter the mainstream of American life. They would do this by emulating their teachers, becoming, in effect, black Yankees.¹

As the movement gained momentum it soon became clear that women were best suited to carry out this "noble work of civilization." At least they were the ones who volunteered for the job. The schoolmarm came from the sizable segment of the Northern populace who had been touched by, if not active in, the anti-slavery cause.

Furthermore, in evangelical churches and in schools, young Northern women were being told that it was their duty to spread the work of God through missionary work. This educated, unattached, and idealistic group took up the challenge. The mission lasted several years for most of the Yankee teachers, after which time they returned home to resume their lives under more normal circumstances. A few teachers, however, dedicated themselves to the cause of black education. They carried on and often personally supported the schools they had established in the South, living there permanently. The movement's female administrators, who were career reformers, simply put the expertise they had gained in the freedmen's aid movement to work for other causes.

While it is impossible to give a statistical breakdown of what happened to the freedmen's aid administrators and teachers after Reconstruction, enough evidence exists to give some idea of their fate. The freedmen's aid movement proved to be just one in a long line of reform activities for the AFUC's female administrators. It is not difficult to trace their careers because they left their mark on the various organizations and causes in which they were engaged. Let us look briefly at the lives of five of these women: Ednah Dow Cheney, Abby W. May, and Lucretia Crocker, who formed the Teachers' Committee of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society (later a branch of the AFUC),

and Josephine Shaw Lowell and Ellen Collins of the New York Teachers' Committee.

These five women were an impressive group. Cheney and Lowell were widowed young and raised their children alone. The others remained single. They were all well educated for their time, coming from comfortable, reform-minded families. Most had been Garrisonian abolitionists before the war. They belonged to the liberal, nonevangelical Unitarian and Quaker churches. Weaned on reform, they continued to be activists throughout their lives. Before the war, the members of the Boston group had lent their efforts to women's rights and abolition. They continued to work for women and blacks after the war and into their old age. The New Yorkers, on the other hand, became involved with issues taken up by Progressivism: municipal reform, charity work, housing reform.

Members of the New England group were in their early thirties when the Civil War began. Cheney, May, and Crocker made up the group's core. Although the Teachers' Committee was run collectively, as secretary Cheney was its chief spokeswoman. She came from a long line of Boston reformers. Her father, Sargent Littlehale, was a Universalist and an early believer in abolition and women's rights. His daughter counted Margaret Fuller, Theodore Parker, and R. W. Emerson as her chief intellectual mentors.

Cheney was left a widow with a young daughter to

raise soon after her marriage to portrait painter Seth Cheney in 1853. After his death she became active in Boston reform circles, especially in the cause of medical education for women. She served as an officer of a newly founded hospital in 1859 in connection with the New England Female Medical College. After the war Cheney resumed her interest in women's rights. She was one of the founders and principal backers of the New England Women's Club in 1868. Together with Abby W. May and Lucretia Crocker, she led a successful fight to gain Massachusetts women the right to vote in the election of school board members. In 1880, Cheney and May organized the Massachusetts School Suffrage Association, to prepare and encourage women to exercise their new right. Cheney also served as an officer in the Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Association and the New England Woman Suffrage Association.

Cheney maintained her interest in black education throughout her life. She gave financial support to a number of institutions for higher education that served Southern blacks. Cheney contributed regularly to Tuskegee Institute, endowed a scholarship there, and left the school \$7,000 in her will. She also publicized the school among her circle of reform-minded friends. In addition, she contributed to Atlanta University. Although Cheney was opposed to his accommodationist policies, she was a friend and adviser of Booker T. Washington, who valued her advice

and opinions.²

Abby W. May also came from a prominent family of Boston reformers, which included her well-known first cousin, Samuel Joseph May, a Unitarian clergyman and abolitionist. During the war, May was active in the New England Women's Auxiliary Association of the United States Sanitary Commission. From 1866 to 1873, she put her energies to work for the AFUC New England Teachers' Committee. After the war, May turned to the cause of women's rights. As noted above, she was especially active in the suffrage movement. In 1874, she became a member of the executive committees of both the New England and Massachusetts Woman Suffrage Associations and later served as vice president of each. In her later years she was involved in promoting the cause of college education for women.³

Lucretia Crocker was one of the few professional educators to serve on the Teachers' Committees. She graduated from the Massachusetts State Normal School at West Newton in 1850 and taught geography, mathematics, and natural science there as well as at Antioch College. After the war, Crocker participated in the suffrage effort and was one of the first women elected to the Boston School Committee. Her main interest, however, was in promoting the teaching of science: she helped to revolutionize science teaching in the Boston schools.⁴

Josephine Shaw Lowell and Ellen Collins, principal

administrators of the New York branch of the AFUC, ran the Teachers' Committee, raised funds, and visited the freedmen's schools in Virginia for the National Freedmen's Relief Association. Eighteen year old, Lowell was the youngest of the group. She too came from a family of radical Boston abolitionists. In 1847, however, the family moved to New York to be near her mother's eye specialist. Josephine married Col. Charles Russell Lowell in 1863, but he died just a year later from a wound, six weeks before his wife gave birth to a daughter. Lowell subsequently threw herself into work for freedmen's relief and education.

After the war she put her energies into the New York Charities Aid Association, which made inspections of state charitable institutions. Her excellent reports gained her a statewide reputation, and in 1876 Governor Samuel J. Tilden appointed her the first woman member of the State Board of Charities. In 1882, Lowell helped to found the New York Charity Organization Society, which she led for twenty years. During that time she wrote numerous books and articles attempting to formulate a theoretical basis for state-administered philanthropy. She believed that the main purpose of charity should be to make the recipient a productive member of society through personal reformation. In her later years, however, she turned to the problem of preventing pauperism, which led her to become a supporter of the labor movement. She was the

principal founder of the Consumer's League of New York, which aimed to improve wages and working conditions by organizing consumers and using the power of the boycott. During the 1890s, Lowell increasingly devoted herself to municipal reform, organizing the Woman's Municipal League in 1894 during a citywide anti-Tammany campaign. Throughout the years Lowell continued to support education for blacks. In the early 1900s she contributed \$10,000 to help create an endowment fund for Atlanta University.⁵

Like her co-worker Josephine Shaw Lowell, New York Quaker Ellen Collins pursued the cause of freedmen's education during and after the Civil War. She also worked for the New York State Board of Charities, visiting and reporting on public charitable institutions. In the 1880s, Collins turned her attention to housing reform. Through personal investments she sought to rehabilitate housing on New York's Lower East Side by establishing a demonstration project there. Collins wrote extensively on housing reform, believing that landlords could influence their tenants' behavior through economic pressure. She also strongly believed that an area's housing stock should be preserved and renovated in the battle against the growth of slums.⁶

The women who founded and ran the freedmen's schools that lasted past 1872 present a similar profile as the AFUC's Teachers' Committee members. They too had been

Garrisonian abolitionists before the war and were Unitarians or Quakers. These teachers remained single, often sharing their life with another woman. They too were feminists, although their major lifelong commitment was to the cause of black education. Except for brief visits north, their arena of activity was in the South, which considerably limited their contact with post bellum Northern reform activities. The best known of these teachers were Laura Towne and Ellen Murray, founders of the Penn School on St. Helena Island, South Carolina; Martha Schofield, founder of the Schofield Normal and Industrial School in Aiken, South Carolina; and Sallie Holley and Caroline Putnam, who established and ran the Holley School in Lottsburg, Virginia.

The story of these Northern women who resolutely carried on their schools well after Reconstruction has been captured by Katherine Herbig in her dissertation, "Friends for Freedom: The Lives and Careers of Sallie Holley and Caroline Putnam." Holley, the better known of the pair, was born in Canandaigua county in western New York in 1818. As a young woman, Holley idealized her father, Myron Holley, who favored political abolitionism as the best road to ending slavery. Myron Holley was an effective anti-slavery lecturer, active in the anti-masonry movement, and a principal organizer of the Liberty Party. Sallie always regarded him as the inspiration for

her own anti-slavery work. Sallie's mother was a Methodist but Sallie followed her father's example and joined the Unitarian Church in 1841. When Sallie entered Oberlin College in 1847 at the age of twenty-nine, she was the only Unitarian and one of the only "ultras" (Garrisonians) at the school.⁷

At Oberlin she met Caroline Putnam, eight years her junior, who shared her brand of abolitionism. Both stood out from the average evangelical Oberlin student. The two women became lifelong companions and co-workers, first on the anti-slavery lecture circuit and later as freedmen's teachers. In many ways, their relationship was like a traditional marriage, with Holley the more dominant, public figure and Putnam the more supportive and submissive.

In 1868, after spending years working in the anti-slavery movement, Caroline Putnam set up a freedmen's school in rural Lottsburg, Virginia. Holley followed her friend there two years later. The school lasted for forty-three years. During that time, the curriculum of the Holley School changed very little. The women utilized a traditional Northern curriculum adapted to the needs of a one-room schoolhouse. Aside from the basics, they placed emphasis on imparting the abolitionist heritage to their students. A student choir, the "Holley School Band of Mercy," sang for holidays and commemorations of dates

from anti-slavery history. Sallie Holley also taught a class on the history of the abolitionist movement, using illustrations from her own life. According to Herbig, "the school became an archive of anti-slavery relics, and the legends were proudly passed down through generations of black schoolchildren."⁸

The women never developed friendships with the local whites, but gradually they became accepted as fixtures in the environment. Several factors helped this process along. One was that in 1869 Caroline Putnam's Republican friends in Washington secured an appointment for her as local postmistress. The Holley School became the local post office, bringing the teachers into regular contact with their neighbors. The second element was that loyal Northern friends continued to send the women barrels of supplies, which they bartered for needed goods and services with the black and poorer white inhabitants of Lottsburg.⁹

Remaining in the South proved to be very difficult for the Northern teachers. Aside from the companionship of a series of young women who regularly came down from Northern colleges to help them, Holley and Putnam led lonely, isolated lives. They were basically Yankee schoolmarms who had outlived a mission long forgotten by most of their contemporaries.

The majority of teachers, evangelicals who taught for several years and then returned North, are the most

difficult group to trace. They left few memoirs, and gradually their names faded into obscurity. Two biographical dictionaries from Mount Holyoke and Oberlin, however, suggest what happened to a small number of these women. Twenty-six women who attended these two institutions between 1858 and 1871 were said to have taught in Southern freedmen's schools. Of these, ten subsequently married--four to clergymen, two to teachers, three to scientists, and one to a man identified as "other." Twelve of the women continued to teach after leaving the freedmen's schools, two became missionaries, two took up nursing, and one became a librarian.¹⁰

The teachers' biographies show that many of them continued in the helping professions or in missionary work. Even those who married and had children chose men who were also concerned with caring for and helping others, i.e., teachers and clergymen. A glance at several of the Mount Holyoke entries illustrates their life patterns. Ellen M. Horton, for example, taught in Massachusetts, Ohio, and New York before becoming a freedmen's teacher in Wilmington, North Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia. From 1873 to 1905 she worked in the AMA's New York offices. She then moved to Oakland, California, to do missionary work among the Chinese. Nancy Francis graduated from Mount Holyoke in 1863 and opened a freemen's school in North Carolina. In 1867, she married a minster, Lucien

H. Adams. They had two children and became missionaries in Turkey, where Nancy Adams died in 1890. Anna Elizabeth Carpenter taught the freedmen in Arlington Heights, Virginia. She married scientist Michael Schuch's Bebb in 1867 and had six children. Ellen M. Patrick taught in Milford, Connecticut, and Sag Harbor, New York, before becoming a freedmen's teacher in Charleston, South Carolina. After the war she returned to Milford where she taught from 1867 to 1872, when she moved to Cincinnati to teach. Apparently Patrick continued to trailblaze, for she died in Alaska in 1910.¹¹

It appears that for at least some Northern teachers the freedmen's aid movement was part of a larger commitment to reform. The New England Garrisonians worked for abolition and women's rights before the war and afterward continued to focus in some way upon these same groups. The movement prepared others to work with the immigrant groups pouring into the Northern cities in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Josephine Shaw Lowell, for example, became one of the best known charity organizers and theoreticians of her day. Some of the evangelical teachers continued to save souls in other places. The majority of Yankee schoolmarmes, however, probably returned home to live more conventional lives. Many continued in the teaching profession. Some got married, and raised families. Their early training and their experiences in the South most likely sustained in them a sympathy for the less

fortunate and a desire for a more just society. No doubt they looked back to their days as freedmen's teachers as a time of courageous sacrifice and hard work to make their vision come true.

Did the teachers succeed in their mission? Initially their goals were vast--the total moral and educational transformation of the freedpeople and even of the entire South itself. To make an evaluation more manageable one might first ask to what extent the freedmen's aid movement furthered black education in the South. The freedmen's schools offered the first organized educational opportunity the ex-slaves had had. According to all accounts, the blacks enthusiastically embraced the schools and made sacrifices so that they and their children might attend. Due to the physical and economic dislocation and chaos caused by the war, however, many pupils were only able to go to school intermittently. Under such circumstances it is hard to gauge just how many blacks attended the schools. Historians' estimates vary. James McPherson believes that no more than 10 percent of school-age freedmen ever attended the societies' schools. Jacqueline Jones thinks that the Georgia average never passed 5 percent. However, she has calculated that in the late 1860s the Savannah and Atlanta rates of attendance were as high as 50 or 75 percent, and that in some states the schools reached approximately 15 percent of the black population. The freedmen's schools

clearly benefited the urban minority the most.¹²

By 1870, interest in the plight of the Southern black was waning in the North. Financial support for the freedmen's aid movement tapered off. In that year the Freedmen's Bureau ceased to operate and the benevolent societies were forced either to close down or to retrench. The freedmen's schools had served their purpose. They proved that ex-slaves were educable and, moreover, that they very much desired education. Freedmen's aid workers did their best to publicize this. When the Southern states established public education systems between 1868 and 1870, the example of the freedmen's schools made it more difficult to deny blacks access to education. Many Southerners, in fact, were anxious to wrest control of black education from the hands of the Yankees. On the whole, the Northerners, with reservations, supported the absorption of their schools by the public schools. They had always believed that elementary education should be tax-supported and not privately funded, but they decried the unequal funding of black schools and the discriminatory policies against hiring Northern teachers or blacks associated with the Northern benevolent societies.

Nevertheless, the public schools proved to be popular among blacks many of whom deserted the remaining tuition-charging freedmen's schools for the free public ones. Apparently, in many places black education prospered.

According to Jones, for example, in Georgia in 1873, 15 percent of black children attended public schools. By 1880, 43 percent of black children were listed on the public school rolls. The pattern in South Carolina was similar. Historian Joel Williamson found that the percentage of blacks of school age attending school in South Carolina rose from 9 percent in 1869 to 44 percent in 1876.¹³

The freedmen's aid movement played a more significant role in establishing institutions of higher learning for blacks. Without the help of the Northern benevolent societies higher education probably would not have been available to blacks in the South for the rest of the century. While the AFUC established a handful of normal schools, the AMA was clearly the champion of higher education. Between 1866 and 1869, the AMA chartered seven institutions: Berea College, Fisk University, Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, Talladega College, and Straight University. These schools produced large numbers of black teachers. According to historian Richard Drake, in 1888 there were "15,000 Negro teachers in the South instructing 800,000 pupils. Of the total, 13,500 teachers had been trained in schools supported by Northern benevolence, and seven thousand of them had been trained in AMA schools."¹⁴

The Northerners, especially the evangelicals, proba-

bly had the most success in instilling their "lessons of civilization" in the teachers they trained. In their normal schools and colleges AMA teachers rigorously taught Yankee middle-class values and decorum. They imparted a desire for mobility through education and hard work and thereby contributed to the growth of a small Southern black middle class which like Booker T. Washington, was willing to accommodate itself to the restrictions imposed by Southern racism. In return, its members helped to carve out a space where blacks could enjoy a respectable, productive--if circumscribed--life. The old Garrisonians were not happy with this plan. Ednah Cheney, for example, chastized Washington for the meekness he exhibited in his Atlanta speech. Like her reform-minded friends, Cheney had hoped that her efforts would have resulted in the realization of a fuller equality for black Americans.¹⁵

At the outset, the arrival of the freedmen's teachers in the South drew a great deal of attention. As it turned out, the changes they wrought in Southern life were not very dramatic. They did little to influence the major economic or political policies that dominated the region during and after Reconstruction. But they did bring hope and the joy of learning to the few who were able to attend their schools. One might not agree with all of their assumptions or values, but, taking the long view of history, they should be counted among its heroines.

NOTES

- ¹ Boston Educational Commission (Boston, 1862).
- ² For short biographical sketches of Cheney, May, Crocker, Lowell, and Collins, including a bibliography of their writings see, Edward James, ed., Notable American Women (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 325-27, 360-62, 407-09, 437-39, 513-15; James M. McPherson, The Abolitionist Legacy, From Reconstruction to the NAACP (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 158.
- ³ James, Notable American Women, p. 514.
- ⁴ Ibid., pp. 407-08.
- ⁵ James, Notable American Women, pp. 437-38; McPherson, The Abolitionist Legacy, p. 159.
- ⁶ James, Notable American Women, pp. 360, 361.
- ⁷ Katherine Lydigsen Herbig, "Friends For Freedom: The Lives and Careers of Sallie Holley and Caroline Putnam," (Ph.D dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1977).
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 295.
- ⁹ Ibid., pp. 253-76.
- ¹⁰ One Hundred Year Biographical Directory of Mount Holyoke College 1837-1937 (South Hadley, 1937); Semi-Centennial Register of the Officers and Alumni of Oberlin College (Chicago, 1883).
- ¹¹ Dictionary of Mount Holyoke College, pp. 91-128; For additional information on Nancy Francis see, Louise Porter Thomas, Seminary Militant (South Hadley, Massachusetts: Department of English, 1937), pp. 70-71.
- ¹² James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 406; Jacqueline Jones, Soldiers of Light and Love (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 203.
- ¹³ Jones, Soldiers, p. 199; Joel Williamson, After Slavery, The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), p. 229.

¹⁴Richard Bryant Drake, "The American Missionary Association and the Southern Negro, 1861-1888" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1957), p. 186.

¹⁵Letter from Booker T. Washington to Ednah Cheney, October 15, 1895, Ednah Cheney Manuscripts, Boston Public Library.

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