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A Gracious People

> High living and hospitality were universal. Well-bred gentlemen set the key-note for good manners; horse-racing; fox-hunting; fish-fries; bird-suppers; and whist parties brought the people together and promoted good fellowship. The old Virginia gentleman was the beau ideal in the mind of every aspiring youth of that day.
>
> – *The Reverend Dr. William S. White of Virginia*[1]

HOSPITALITY

Life in southern slave society centered in the countryside – in plantations, farms, and villages. Charleston, Richmond, and New Orleans aside, most southern cities looked like small towns to visiting Europeans and Northerners. Towns with a thousand or so people anchored slave society culturally, socially, and politically. They did not threaten to dominate the countryside, as did the cities and commercial towns during the transition from seigneurial to bourgeois society in Europe and from rural-freehold to bourgeois society in the North. In the heartland, many miles often separated farms and plantations. Frederick Law Olmsted, traveling through northern Mississippi in the 1850s, remarked that rarely did a plantation have a dozen "intelligent families" within a day's ride: "Any society that a planter enjoys on his estate must, therefore, consist in a great degree of permanent guests." To overcome isolation, churches and county courthouses provided meeting places for social and educational events. In the

[1] *"Stonewall" Jackson's Pastor: Rev. William S. White, D. D., and His Times (1800–1873): An Autobiography* (Harrisonburg, VA, 2005 [1891]), 17.

larger communities, political barbecues, dinners, and rallies supplemented them. Brief and extended visits from friends and kin enhanced social life.[2]

"In those days," wrote the well-respected scientist Joseph LeConte of Georgia, "literally everybody was glad to see everybody else and to have a visitor stay as long as possible, and no one had the least hesitation in doing so." LeConte recalled that his northern uncle spent winters at his father's rice plantation, and that Alfred Nisbet, who supported a wife and five children on $2,000 a year, entertained no thought of limiting his guests' stay. A story may be apocryphal, but folks in the low country accepted it as paradigmatic: A couple came to spend their honeymoon on John Couper's plantation on St. Simons and stayed until the birth of their second child.[3]

"Virginia hospitality" – a commonplace in the eighteenth century – metamorphosed into "southern hospitality" in the nineteenth. Northern states, notably Massachusetts, promoted rural inns to discourage individuals from turning their homes into stopping places for travelers. Virginia did the opposite. Early in the nineteenth century, American inns, especially in the South, were generally of poor quality. Travelers preferred to stay with families that supplemented their incomes and had much better facilities. Generally, travelers had pleasant experiences, but some hosts resented having to take them in. The Marquis de Chastellux, Louis-Philippe, and James Stuart found some women who boarded strangers surly, peevish, and resentful. In the absence of local taverns, the inflow of visitors, including passers-by, compelled some of the well-to-do to charge for food and lodgings they might have provided without cost under other circumstances. Travel in Texas replicated travel in the East. In 1858, Louise Wigfall and her father found lodgings at a farmhouse, "whose owners were accustomed, in a country where there were no inns, to receive occasional travelers."[4]

[2] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Back Country* (New York, 1970 [1860]), 120.

[3] William Dallam Armes, ed., *The Autobiography of Joseph LeConte* (New York, 1903), 60, quote at 105; [Joseph LeConte], *LeConte's Report on East Florida*, ed. Richard Adicks (Orlando, FL, 1978), 6, 8; on Couper see Barbara Hull, *St. Simons Enchanted Island: A History of the Most Historic of Georgia's Fabled Golden Isles* (Atlanta, GA, 1980), 60.

[4] Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America*, 4 vols., (New York, 1968 [1915]), 1:221–222; Gaillard Hunt, *As We Were: Life in America, 1814* (Stockbridge, MA, 1993), 53–54; Louis-Philippe, King of France, *Diary of My Travels in America*, tr. Stephen Becker (New York, 1976), Apr. 26, 29, 1797; James Stuart in William Brownlow Posey, ed., *Alabama in the 1830's, As Recorded by Travelers* (Birmingham, AL, 1938), 6; William M. Mathew, ed., *Agriculture, Geology, and Society in Antebellum South Carolina: The Private Diary of Edmund Ruffin* (Athens, GA, 1992), Mar. 15–18 (141), Apr. 20–22, 1843

Southerners counted hospitality among the Christian virtues, which included forbearance. And many Christians needed all the forbearance they could muster. Anna Matilda King of the St. Simon's, Georgia, wrote to her son that Miss Margaret Cuyler had concluded a three-week visit: "She is on the whole more bearable – than on her former visits." Aunt Yates, a friend rather than kin of Mississippi's David Holt and family, arrived for weeks or months at a time. Unfortunately, she was forever rebuking the children for boisterousness, albeit to little avail.[5]

Yet, Richard Beale Davis, in *Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia*, suggests that the manners of Virginia gentlemen may have owed as much to such ancients as Aristotle and Horace as to Christianity. Southerners seem to have accepted Jonathan Swift's Ciceronian description of good manners as "the art of making those people easy with whom we converse." Thomas Jefferson spoke of "our practice of placing our guests at their ease and showing them we are so ourselves." In that spirit, Thomas Roderick Dew praised the "unbounded" hospitality of the ancient Greeks, the medieval Europeans, the Arabs, and the Tartars. Abolitionists acknowledged southern hospitality but with a nasty twist. James Birney hurled a grenade at Senator F. H. Elmore of South Carolina, charging that the vaunted southern hospitality rested on "unpaid wages of the laborer – the robbery of the poor."[6]

(209–210); Mrs. D. Giraud Wright [Louise Wigfall], *A Southern Girl in '61: The War-Time Memories of a Confederate Senator's Daughter* (New York, 1905), 4–5.

[5] A. M. King to Lord King, May 15, 1849, in Anna Matilda King, *Anna: The Letters of a St. Simons Plantation Mistress*, ed. Melanie Pavich-Lindsay (Athens, GA, 2002), 57; Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1995), 4, 22–24; Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard, eds., *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1995), 4, 22–24;

[6] Cynthia A. Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability, and Gender in the Southern Colonies, *JSH* (1996), 455; Richard Beale Davis, *Intellectual Life in Jefferson's Virginia, 1790–1830* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1964), 6; Swift quoted in Caroline Moore, "Being a Gentleman: Manners, Independence and Integrity," in Digby Anderson, ed., *Gentility Recalled: "Mere" Manners and the Making of the Social Order* (London, 1996), 57; Jefferson quoted in William Howard Adams, *The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 16; Thomas Roderick Dew, *Digest of the Laws, Customs, Manners, and Institutions of the Ancient and Modern Nations* (New York, 1884 [1852]), 47; James G. Birney, "Correspondence," *Anti-Slavery Examiner*, May 1, 1838, p. 28. For "unpaid labor," see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, *Slavery in White and Black: Class and Race in the Southern Slaveholders' New World Order* (New York, 2008), 158–163.

Brushing off carping abolitionists, young ladies held gentlemen to high standards of deportment and did not take kindly to undue familiarity. The young Maria Bryan explained her unfavorable reaction to a Mr. Bailey, who arrived from the North to teach at Mount Zion Academy in Georgia in 1826: "I am very much disappointed with him indeed. He is very good looking in face and person, really handsome at times, but he is so much a coxcomb in his manners that it does away with all the agreeable impression he makes." More particularly, the ladies carefully monitored the manner in which men addressed them. Emma Holmes of Charleston resented men who addressed ladies they hardly knew by their Christian names, and Dr. Strother much irritated the young Sarah Lois Wadley when he called her "Miss Sarah": "Tabitha and I exchanged glances. I had said that evening that I liked to be called 'Miss Wadley' by new acquaintances. She had said that evening that she expected to be called 'Miss Wadley' by new acquaintances."[7]

Chastellux declared Virginians deserving of their reputation "for living nobly in their homes and of being hospitable. They receive strangers both willingly and well." More than a half-century later in Lexington, Margaret Junkin paralleled "fox-hunting English," "smoking Germans," and "opium-eating Chinese" with "visiting Virginians." Without large cities, Virginians created society in their rural neighborhoods and had slaves prepare and serve food and look after guests. As a much-appreciated bonus, gentlemen who stayed overnight at the plantation could expect brandy or wine for a nightcap and an "eye-opener" when they awoke the next morning or at the breakfast table. From the seventeenth century, many Virginians routinely had a mint julep before breakfast. In eighteenth-century Virginia even children had an eye-opener of peach brandy with mint and crushed ice. William Wells Brown's master, mistress, and young son loved their pitcher of mint julep before morning prayers and breakfast. Brown, allowing, "I loved the julep as well as any of them," maneuvered to get a share. Even in the low country and on the Sea Islands, passers-by of various kinds received a warm welcome from whites and blacks. Blacks acquired a reputation for sharing food with anyone who stopped by – gifts, not sales. For reasons whites could not fathom, most slaves had plenty of eggs. In the lonely and monotonous

[7] Maria Bryan to Julia Ann Bryan Cumming, Dec. 11, 1826, in Carol Bleser, ed., *Tokens of Affection: The Letters of a Planter's Daughter in the Old South* (Athens, GA, 1996), 15; Emma Holmes, Feb. 26, 1861, in John F. Marszalek, ed., *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1979), 9; Wadley Private Journal, Mar. 23, 1863.

upcountry, numerous relatives and friends were welcome to stay for weeks. Junius Hillyer remarked, "Our house was scarcely ever free from company." Upcountry warmth extended even to Yankee peddlers whom Hillyer acknowledged as "educated and gentlemen in their manners and men of fine sense."[8]

D. W. Mitchell, an Englishman who spent a decade in America, primarily in Virginia, embraced Southerners as a sociable people who exchanged unceremonious visits. Younger family members spent days and weeks together with neighbors and relations: "They are also fond of a rural life; more so, I think, than the English. In this respect it is very different in the North, where rural life seems to be a life of repulsive drudgery, and the towns are looked to for pleasure, ambition, refinement, and social intercourse." British travelers, whether pro- or antislavery, extolled the rough Southwest.[9]

Like planters across the South, Alexander Stephens of Georgia gave guests the run of the place to do pretty much as they pleased. Leonidas Polk of Tennessee and Louisiana rarely had two consecutive days without company for breakfast, dinner, or supper or without overnight guests, but the family routine proceeded as usual. Between meals guests entertained themselves. Yet their wants were looked after and frequently anticipated by the slaves who would often seem invisible. "G. M.," a Northerner, wrote of the typical South Carolinian: "He has in his carriage and feelings, something of the Don; yet he is republican and would not exact from another what he would be unwilling to render in return. Be generous and confiding, and he will out-do you in generosity and confidence." A Canadian recalled from his visit to the McCords and Hamptons in

[8] Marquis de Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780,1781, and 1782*, 2 vols., rev. tr. H. C. Rice, Jr. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1963), 2:441; Margaret Junkin Preston to [?], Nov. 25, 1850, in Elizabeth Preston Allan, *The Life and Letters of Margaret Junkin Preston* (Boston, MA, 1923), 49; Mrs. Pryor [Sara Agnes Rice Pryor], *Mother of Washington and Her Times* (New York, 1903), 198; William W. Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, An American Slave, Written by Himself* (London, 1849), 13; T. Reed Ferguson, *The John Couper Family at Cannon's Point* (Macon, GA, 1994), 77–82; Henry William Ravenel, "Recollections of Southern Plantation Life," ed. Marjorie Stratford Mendenhall, *Yale Review*, 25 (1936), 757; *The Life and Times of Judge Junius Hillyer: From His Memoirs* (Tignall, GA, 1989), 45.

[9] D. W. Mitchell, *Ten Years in the United States: Being an Englishman's Views of Men and Things in the North and South* (London, 1862), 30. Travelers' comments in Posey, ed., *Alabama in the 1830's*, 4. For nightcaps and eye-openers, see Curtis B. Pye, "Letters from the South," in Eugene L. Schwaab and Jacqueline Bull, eds., *Travels in the South: Selected from Periodicals of the Time*, 2 vols. (Lexington, KY, 1973), 2:531–532; Olmsted, *Back Country*, 150.

South Carolina, "To accept the hospitality of the Southerner meant that he would do all he could for you."[10]

Reuben Davis, a prominent black-belt politician, wrote proudly of Monroe County, Mississippi: "Owing to the great fertility of the soil, the people were generally prosperous. I suppose there was never a community more frank and genial in their hospitality, or more liberal in their dealings with both friend and stranger. It is not too much to say that every house was opened to the traveler – every hand outstretched to aid and welcome him." In the 1840s, a Presbyterian minister, his wife, and four children visited the family of Dr. David Holt of Wilkinson County, Mississippi, and stayed more than a year, somehow surviving the dancing, card-playing, fun-loving ways of their Episcopalian hosts. Relatives and friends came for a week, a month, a year. In the wealthy sugar parishes of Louisiana hardly a month passed without overnight guests on the plantations, and few families sat down to dinner without guests. In a burst of graciousness toward despised Yankees, A. B. Meek of Alabama credited them with contributing to the Southwest's reputation.[11]

The necessity for mutual adjustment made hospitality – "the chief of social virtues" – an imperative. To function as society's leading element, especially in difficult times, the well-to-do needed to know their peers. And in bad times, they needed informal networks of reciprocity.

The frequent trips that husbands took for business, political meetings, church conferences, and other purposes placed severe burdens on their families. The women undertook to combat the loneliness by seeking female neighbors and kin, cooperating in church groups, and sometimes making their own trips to see families. One benefit: Many felt compelled to learn something of the plantation management.[12]

[10] Alexander H. Stephens, *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States* (2 vols. (New York, 1970 [1868, 1870]), 1:115; William M. Polk, *Leonidas Polk, Bishop and General*, 2 vols. (New York, 1915), 1:188; G. M., "South-Carolina," in *New England Magazine*, 1 (1831), 247; the Canadian's recollections in Louisa M. Smythe, ed., *For Old Lang Syne: Collected for My Children* (Charleston, SC, 1900), 4; George Cary Eggleston, *A Rebel's Recollections* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1996 [1871]), 44.

[11] Reuben Davis, *Recollections of Mississippi and Mississippians* (Oxford, MS, 1972 [1879], 8; Cockrell and Ballard, eds., *Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 22–24; J. Carlyle Sitterson, "The McCollams: A Planter Family of the Old and New South," *JSH*," 6 (1940), 347–367; Meredith Flournoy Ingersoll, comp., "Excerpts from the History of the Flournoy Family" (typescript); A. B. Meek, *Romantic Passages in Southwestern History* (Mobile, AL, 1857), 51.

[12] Philip Hamilton, "Gentry Women and the Transformation of Daily Life in Jeffersonian and Antebellum Virginia," Angela Boswell and Judith N. McArthur, eds., *Women Shaping the South: Creating and Confronting Change* (Colombia, MO, 2006), 22–23; Anne Sinkler Whaley LeClerq, ed., *Between North and South: The Letters of Emily*

Friendly scientists in Charleston provided letters of introduction to Sir Charles Lyell, the distinguished geologist, but they issued a caveat. They told him to move about rapidly if he expected to get any work done, or local hospitality would eat up all his time at dinners and social events. "Much has been said in praise of the hospitality of the southern planter," Lyell told his fellow Britons, "but they alone who have traveled in the southern states, can appreciate the perfect ease and politeness with which a stranger is made to feel himself at home." The liberality of the big planters charmed Alexander MacKay, an antislavery British traveler, who reported having a slave to attend to him constantly. Lyell and Mackay reiterated what British travelers had reported from the early days of the Republic.[13]

In the aftermath of the abolitionist eruption in the 1830s, J. S. Buckingham arrived in Charleston with letters of introduction from friends in Washington and the North: "By all parties I was received with a great deal of cordiality and kindness, and nearly all of them took the earliest opportunity to wait on us at the hotel." After similar receptions in Savannah and Augusta, he praised the "graceful ease and quiet elegance" of well-bred southern ladies and gentlemen. In contrast, Northerners betrayed "doubts and ambiguity" about their relative rank and position. Overstrained efforts to be thought genteel made strangers feel themselves to be in the presence of persons anxious about the opinion of others and new to polished society. Alexander Wilson, Philadelphia's acerbic ornithologist, confessed to finding the hospitality of Southerners, especially Charlestonians, impressively gracious. Aaron Burr, repairing to John Couper's place on St. Simons after his duel with Alexander Hamilton, could hardly believe the attentions rendered by the numerous servants.

Ralph Waldo Emerson experienced similar graciousness, which he gratuitously associated with masters' duplicity toward slaves. Bishop

Wharton Sinkler, 1842–1865 (Columbia, SC, 2001), 145; Carmichael Diary, Oct. 9, 10, 1837, Sept. 6, 1840; Davis Diary, Dec. 8, 1839; Fletcher "Autobiography" (ms), Winter, 1841–1842; Bethell Diary, Sept. 4, 1857, Aug. 13, 1860; Carney Diary, May 16, 1859, Jan. 1, 1861; Bills Diary, April 1, June 25, Oct. 10, 1853, July 13 1860, Jan. 5, 1865; Mrs. H. G. Lewis to Mrs. J. M. Hunt, July 29, 1837, in Hughes Family Papers.

[13] Charles Lyell, *Travels in North America, Canada, and Nova Scotia, with Geological Observations*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1855 [1845]), 1:155; Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States of North America*, 2 vols., (London, 1849), 1:245; Alexander MacKay, *The Western World; Or, Travels in the United States in 1846–1847*, 3 vols. (New York, 1968 [1849]), 2:81. Also, Jane Louise Mesick, *The English Traveller in America, 1785–1835* (Westport, CT, 1970), 61–62; Allan Nevins, ed., *American Social History as Recorded by British Travellers* (New York, 1923), 7.

William Meade of Virginia probably did not know of Emerson's slur, but he had an answer of sorts. Meade made much of an incident in South Carolina that he thought typical of the South. He and his family visited a plantation to find the white family absent. House servants, one of whom read Meade's letter of introduction, entertained the Meades courteously and lavishly for two days.[14]

For Harriett Martineau, who opposed slavery, Southerners were the best mannered of Americans, despite a touch of arrogance, and New Englanders the least. She added that Southerners received travelers wonderfully – except for abolitionists. In Virginia twenty years later, Olmsted commented, "Between man and man, more ceremony and form is sustained, in familiar conversation, than well-bred people commonly use at the North." In the Southwest, Matilda Charlotte Houstoun, the British novelist, applauded the "courtesy and civility of Texans." The combination of hospitality with fierceness toward abolitionists extended beyond the master–slave relation. Dr. Rush Nutt, a Virginian on a visit to western Mississippi, complimented the Chickasaws: "No people express hospitality more than the Indians, or with a better will, & live as if all things were in common." Indians and Southerners shared some traits. Nutt added, "To their enemies [the Indians] are implacable." A common saying: A Southerner would remain polite until angry enough to kill.[15]

In the 1850s, the popular novelist G. P. R. James settled in Virginia as British consul. Virginia-reared Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Caute Reynolds of Missouri told James to expect unsurpassed hospitality. James observed that in the cities only the well-to-do could afford hospitality, whereas in the country almost everyone practiced it whether they could afford it or not. He considered Southerners in a class by themselves – open and frank, unostentatious and unpretentious. A stranger – at least if

[14] J. S. Buckingham, *The Slave States of America*, 2 vols. (New York, 1968 [1842]),8, 91, 123, 163; Alexander Wilson to Daniel H. Miller, Feb. 22, 1809, Clark Hunter, ed., *The Life and Letters of Alexander Wilson* (Philadelphia, PA, 1983), 301; Linda T. Prior, "Ralph Waldo Emerson and South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 79 (1978), 256; Hull, *St. Simon's Enchanted Island*, 59 (Burr); William Meade, *Sketches of Old Virginia Family Servants* (Philadelphia, 1847), 7.

[15] Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, 2 vols. (London, 1838), 1:145, 210, 225; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York, 1968 [1856]), 51; Mrs. [Matilda Charlotte.] *Houstoun, Texas and the Gulf of Mexico; or, Yachting in the Gulf of Mexico* (Austin, TX, 1968 [1845]), 127; C. P. Roland, "The South of the Agrarians," in William C. Havard and Walter Sullivan, eds., *A Band of Prophets: The Vanderbilt Agrarians after Fifty Years* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1982), 26; Rush Nutt Diary, 1805 (11), in Haller Nutt Papers; also, Dunbar, *Travel in America*, 2: 502–503.

with a proper letter of introduction – was expected to stay for dinner and, indeed, spend the night. A dinner planned for five or six would expand without ado to accommodate thirty or so. The wealthiest planters often entertained twenty, thirty, fifty, or more people at a time. Ferry Hill, a small plantation in western Maryland with twenty-five slaves, had up to ten callers arrive each day: Two to five stayed for dinner, and two to four stayed the night, some for from three days to more than three weeks. Hence the diary entry for January 7, 1838: "There has been no company tonight to interrupt the quiet of the family."[16]

To accommodate many guests at one time, the wealthier built large plantation houses with separate quarters, unattached or attached with private entrances. Yet even they had to improvise. John C. and Floride Calhoun had eight bedrooms at Fort Hill, but they were hardly enough when, as often happened, relatives and friends poured in. Children had to squeeze, and guests doubled or tripled up. Anna Matilda King had no idea how to put up twenty Harringtons in her modest home. She managed. Her boys shared a room; she slept with her daughter; she consigned the white servants to the living room; and she gave her own room to her guests. Maria Broadus squeezed seven guests into her small house in Charlottesville: "I had a bedstead and trundle-bed for the ladies. A bedstead and a bed on the floor for the gentlemen, a lounge in a small room for another gentleman, and a pallet in Mr. Broadus' study for us. The children I put in their mammy's room." On the more affluent lowcountry plantations, a guest expected a full house and settled for a crude mattress in any space available.[17]

[16] T. C. Reynolds to G. P. R. James, June 20, 1853, in "Glimpses of the Past: Letters of Thomas Caute Reynolds, 1847–1885," *Missouri Historical Society*, 19 (1943), 27; G. P. R. James, "Virginia Country Life" (1858) in Schwaab and Bull, eds., *Travels in the Old South*, 2:519–520; Kinloch Bull, Jr., *The Oligarchs in Colonial and Revolutionary Charleston: Lieutenant Governor William Bull II and His Family* (Columbia, SC, 1991), 43; Carmichael Diary, April 23–25, 1838; Harvey Toliver Cook, *The Life and Legacy of David Rogerson Williams* (New York, 1916), 211; Mary D. Robertson, ed., *Lucy Breckinridge of Grove Hill: The Journal of a Virginia Girl, 1826–1864* (Kent, OH, 1979), 3; Henry Edmund Ravenel, *Ravenel Records* (Atlanta, GA, 1898), 108; Clement Eaton, *Henry Clay and the Art of America Politics* (Boston, MA, 1957), 77; Fletcher M. Green, ed., *Ferry Hill Plantation Journal* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1961), Jan. 7, 1838 (5, Green's calculations).

[17] Franklin L. Riley, ed., "Diary of a Mississippi Planter," in *Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society*, 10 (1909), 305; John Niven, *John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union: A Biography* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1988), 155; Anna Matilda King to Thomas Butler King, June 2, 1842, in T. B. King Papers; Maria C. Broadus to Mrs. Bickers, June 11, 1855, in Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Life and Letters of John Albert Broadus* (Philadelphia, 1909), 128; John B. Irving, *A Day on Cooper River*, 2nd ed. enl. and ed.

Northerners received the same treatment as Southerners – unless suspected of hostility to the South. In the wealthy Florida parishes of Louisiana in the 1820s, Timothy Flint observed: "The opulent planters have many amiable traits of character … high-minded and hospitable, in an eminent degree … frank, dignified." In the 1850s, the Methodist Reverend W. H. Milburn, a Northerner, depicted the South as "full of generous, noble people, independent in thought and speech, tolerant of the opinions of others, as they are bold in the avowal of their own …. No questions were ever asked me as to my views of the 'peculiar institution,' no pledges in regard to my conduct were either desired or given." Milburn had been taken "at once into the homes and the hearts of the people, and during the six years of my sojourn in that land, I experienced nothing but kindness." Years later in the North, "My feelings instinctively turn toward Alabama as a home, and toward the Southern people as my kindred."[18]

Solon Robinson, the northern agricultural journalist and reformer, declared the planters of western Mississippi wonderfully cordial. Even unfriendly Northerners usually escaped rebuke from well-mannered hosts. Bennet H. Barrow of Louisiana complained that Northerners did not know how to behave or know when they were being disagreeable. A traveling salesman from the North explained his preference for the South: "Up North people say, 'What do you know?' Out West they say, 'What can you do?' Down South here they say, 'Come in.' " In the 1850s, deepening suspicion of Northerners took a toll, but Southerners tried to remember their manners. In 1860, Frank Steel visited relatives in Washington County, Mississippi, and wrote to his Republican family in Ohio to recommend that Mrs. Whitney go south. A traveler will be in no more danger in the South than in the North, provided only that he "has learned the important art of holding his tongue":

> If you were to visit a neighbor's house and interfere with his domestic arrangements, it is probable he would not welcome you again, if he did not drive you away at the time. So it is here …. Northerners who have not common prudence

by Louisa Cheves Stoney (Columbia, SC, 1842 [1932]), 173; Also, Chastellux, *Travels*, 2:441; Elizabeth Silverthorne, *Plantation Life in Texas* (College Station, TX, 1986), 182; Edgar Jones Cheatham, "Washington County, Mississippi: Its Antebellum Generation" (M. A. thesis; Tulane University, 1950), 100–101.

[18] Flint quoted in Edwin Adams Davis, ed., *Plantation Life in the Florida Parishes of Louisiana, 1836–1846, as Reflected in the Diary of Bennet H. Barrow* (New York, 1943), 9–10; William Henry Milburn, *Ten Years of Preacher-Life: Chapters from an Autobiography* (New York, 1859), 278, also 325, 334.