

Abbey Mishow

Interview with Abbey Mishow

9 Rose Lane, Charleston, S.C.

—*Jessie A. Butler, Charleston, S.C.*

Among the few ex-slaves still living, irrespective of their age at the close of the War Between the States, the line is still very closely drawn between house servants and their children, and the field hands. Old white-haired Abbey Mishow has "misplaced de paper" telling her age but though she claims to have been very small when the war broke out she still maintains the dignity of a descendant of a house servant, nor will she permit her listeners to forget this fact for an instant.

When the writer called on her, unexpectedly, for an interview, she found Abbey, her house, and grandchildren very clean and neat. There was none of the musty, stale odor about the place common to Negro dwellings.

"I don't remember much 'bout de plantation," said Abbey, "'cept dat dey called it Waterford, and dey planted rice. You see I been jest uh leetle gal; I can't lie and say I remember. I been jest 'bout so high." She indicated about the size of a five or six year old child. "I ain't had no reason for study 'bout um and 'press it on my mind. My mudder died w'en I was almost uh baby; she was de tailor and seamstress for our people. De missus promise my ma to tek care of me, and she sho' did. I was raise just like a pet. De fust crack out of me dat window sash gwine to heist to find out what ail me. I hardly miss my ma, no mudder couldn't treat me better dan I treat.

"We been b'long to Miss (Mrs.) Reese Ford, what live at Waterford plantation, on the Black River," (Georgetown County) Abbey stated. As she mentioned the name of the old "missus," and enumerated the names of her erstwhile owners, Miss Sarah, Miss Clara, Miss Henney, Mr. Willie and Mr. Reese, Abbey's old, wrinkled, black face softened with memories and her voice became gentle as she told of the care and kindness she had received.

"I don't know nothing 'bout de war", she continued. "I was purtected, and tek to de city. I didn't hab nothing to bodder my mind and mek me remember dose days. Mr. Willie lose he arm in de war. I is see de soldiers but I been tek care of. I been spoiled and didn't hab no interest in worryment.

"I don't know nothing about de street on de plantation, and what dey do dere, 'cause I ain't had no 'casion for go dere. I raise in de yard, I didn't wear de kind ob clothes de field-hand chillen wear, and I get my dinner from de kitchen. I don't know nothing 'bout crops 'cause we summered." (The family spent the summers at Plantersville, a resort frequented by the planters of the day) "You see I been leetle, dey didn't 'low me out de yard, I jest tek notes 'round sometimes. I tell you I bin spoiled, I raise

onderneat' Miss Clara dem (and them). I nebber had no idea t'ings would ebber be like dis. I ain't got no man, and no boy, nor no kinnery to help me, nor to do nothing for me, only one weak daughter and she ain't much good. All de nation dead, t'ain't nobody left but me.

"Is I ebber see a ghost? No ma'am, I is hear 'bout dem but I nebber see um. I ain't had 'casion to go out in de night time. I hear Plat-Eye dere but only dem what has to trabble round see um. I believe in my Jesus, yes ma'am, if it ain't been for Him how I lib?"