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Book Review: A Woman Rice Planter

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A WOMAN RICE PLANTER. By Patience Pennington. [pseud.] Edited by Cornelius O. Cathey. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961. xxxiii, 446 pp. Illustrations. \$6.00.)

Elizabeth Waties Allston (who wrote as Patience Pennington) was brought up in ante-bellum Charleston and on the family rice plantations near Georgetown. She received the usual education, at Charleston schools, for the daughter of a wealthy and enlightened South Carolina rice planter. Her planter father had been governor and was a leader in agricultural and community affairs. After the war "Patience" was widowed after a brief marriage. She bought the plantation where she had spent her married life and began rice cultivation on it with no previous experience. At her mother's death in 1896, "Patience" added the old home plantation, Chicora Wood, to her holdings.

The book is a diary by "Patience" of her daily activities and thoughts from 1903 until 1906 when she abandoned her planting activities. It was first printed in the *New York Sun* between 1904 and 1907 and later in book form. "Patience" adopted her pen name and renamed the towns and plantations to hide their identity.

The value of *A Woman Rice Planter* is that it makes the most common life and trials on a rice plantation come alive, and shows the beauty of character and personality of the author. When asked by a Northerner if the Lord did not ignore rice planters because of their continual troubles from nature, "Patience" suggested that the Lord loved both Job and rice planters. This reply is typical of her faith and of her belief that she could do what was necessary - the Lord helps those who helped themselves, "Patience" certainly believed.

As a planter she was not a great success; as a person she achieved a satisfactory life where most people would have given up what they considered an impossible situation. This is a refreshing view of the "New South" not often seen today.

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