



# **Women in Slavery: Selections from her Journal of Residence on a Georgian Plantation, 1838-1839**

*Frances Anne Kemble*

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In these selections from her 'Journal of Residence on a Georgian Plantation' Fanny Kemble gives us a searing, eyewitness account of women in slavery in the antebellum South. With an introduction by Catherine Clinton, this special edition showcases Kemble's unique "insider" but "outsider" ability to translate plantation life so vividly onto the page.

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'Journal of Residence on a Georgian Plantation' (recorded in 1838–1839 but not published until 1863), has secured Fanny Kemble's reputation as a prescient observer of the plantation world of the antebellum South.

While Alexis de Tocqueville and Frederick Law Olmsted wrote about the region as cultural tourists, Fanny Kemble, married to a wealthy American slaveholder, Pierce Butler, with vast holdings in Georgia's Sea Islands, wrote about her experience on her husband's estates from the perspective of an "insider" as well as an "outsider."

It was this double consciousness and Kemble's ability to translate life so dramatically onto the page that provided readers with a sense of being eyewitness to unfolding events. Her rendering of even the most mundane details of everyday life proved fascinating. Her close and vivid remembrances of plantation life have remained enduring.

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Frances Anne Kemble (1809–1893), who came from a British theater family, was a notable actress in the early and mid-nineteenth century. She also wrote plays, poetry, memoirs, and books about travel and the theater. In 1834 she married an American, Pierce Butler, heir to cotton, tobacco, and rice plantations and hundreds of slaves on the Sea Islands of Georgia. Kemble waited until 1863, during the American Civil War, to publish her anti-slavery Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839. She later returned to England where she was active in London society.

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Catherine Clinton is the author and editor of more than two dozen books, including Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars (2000), Mrs. Lincoln: A Life (2009), and Harriet Tubman: The Road to Freedom, named as one of the best nonfiction books of 2004 by the Christian Science Monitor and the Chicago Tribune. Educated at Harvard, Sussex, and Princeton, she is an adviser to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Bicentennial Commission and holds a chair in United States history at Queen's University Belfast.

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