

for their and her own maintainance, put them apprentice, took great care of them during that term, they have been some years free, and have work'd at their trades with reputation; she hop'd that they would be her support in the decline of Life, but how uncertain are all human prospects? they were both taken this fall with the prevailing disease [yellow fever], and died, one the day after the other, the poor mother 'tho very ill at the same time surviv'd them, and may be truly call'd a 'lone woman. . . .

11 April [1794] S S[wett] spent the day try'd on a gown for me. . . .

26 Betsy Fordham left us this afternoon, she has been near 2 weeks at work for us. . . .

20 October [1794] S Swett fitted a mantua gown on me, which I had provided [ordered] in the Summer, she is so kind to do what little I want in that way for me, I beleive I never had a gown better made in my life, and she is now within about seven weeks of 73 years of age, to work so neatly at such an age is the cause of my making the memorandum.

2. Landon Carter Complains About His Female Slaves, 1771–1773

[July 9, 1771]

I find the [slaves at] Fork will not finish the field they are in this day as I expected. The pretence is Nanny was sick one day, when they all had worked half a day in that field before they went into it 4 days ago. But even with overseers this is a constant excuse, if any one person, the most trifling hand, is ill but a day or a piece of a day, it generally excuses the loss of a whole day's work of the gang. . . . The reason is everybody is lazy and careless enough to want an excuse and Catch at anything.

I went to see my cow pen ground and I find that missing and much injured by the horses. I ordered Sukey to make up the hills and set in the double plants at her peril. . . .

[August 10, 1771]

Mary, McGinnis' daughter, at best from a whimsical mother has been hitherto a sound healthy wench, though full of Hysteric frights when ever anything ailed her. I remember once she sat crying as if somebody had whipped her for a trifling belly ache. And 3 weeks agoe she cryed herself into fits because she was sick at the Stomach, and about 10 days agoe A pain in her shoulders gave her more fits. I had her up here and by evacuations joined with nervines She was grown quite well; and of her own accord went out to work this morning; but by 9 o'clock a little fever brought her to her tears and she is as bad as ever. She has a Sister and brother exactly the same; any little complaint fills them with the Apprehensions of death. Nay, the old jade, the mother, cannot have a finger ach but the hole plantations hears her roar.

As to this wench, nothing so odd. She has a full pulse, though too quick but yet soft which indicates she cannot want bleeding, and her looks are those of perfect health. . . . Perhaps she may be breeding; but that she will not confess; and as to every natural complaint, I am given to understand she is quite well. It would possibly be barbarity, but I apprehend there is some trick in all this. . . .

[April 22, 1772]

Billy Beale tells me the cowkeeper, Sicely, neglected her cattle yesterday and let a cow go into the mire below the barn swamp where she perished. I cannot tell what to do with these sordid creatures. The wench is kept to do nothing else but constantly to follow the cattle. But I suppose, tired with such a constant employment, though a very easy one, she looks herself to sleep and so this injury happened; for Beale says it was really a fine cow. I have ordered the wench to be tyed up and severely slashed to keep her care if possible; but I am afraid it will not be long enough remembered. It seems this is the first of that kind which we have lost up here this year. . . .

[September 25, 1772]

There is nothing so absurd as the generality of negroes are. If in the beginning of cutting tobacco without watching they will cut all before them, and now, when there is danger of losing the tobacco by the frost, should it happen, they will not cut plants really ripe because they may be thicker just as if there was time to let it stand longer. My Jades at the Fork would not cut half this they might have done yesterday, because they thought it would be thicker; however I set them in today and made them cut every good plant. . . .

[November 21, 1772]

McGinnis's Jamy's foot, a good whipping and a stout vomit has at last cured him; for I saw his fevers the affect of these fall intermittants, and by proceeding that way he is got about. And so has Mr. Will's joints got clear of their pains by giving a revulsion by his back.

Mrs. Dairy Mary is also cured the same way of her invisible pain in her hip. The mother and sister fell on Beale when he went to apply my Prescription; but by the stumps of the switches they got also cured of their rebellious impudence. . . .

[June 5, 1773]

I find it is almost impossible to make a negro do his work well. No orders can engage it, no encouragement persuade it, nor no Punishment oblige it. It was but on friday several were whipped for leaving the weeds in the middle of the corn rows, and yesterday I would indulge the weakness of some of the wenches. I put them to weeding the light ground Corn expressly ordering them to work from side to side the whole row and yet today I saw that not one had done so, but the whole is to be done over again.