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MARY S. PEAKE,

The Colored Teacher at Fortress Monroe.

By REV. LEWIS C. LOCKWOOD,

FIRST MISSIONARY TO THE FREEDMEN AT FORTRESS MONROE, 1862.

WITH AN APPENDIX.



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Mary S. Peake

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MARY S. PEAKE.

CHAPTER I.

Birth and Parentage.—Education.—Religious Convictions.—Prayers in the Tomb.—Union with
the Church.—Labors for the Poor.—Marriage.

The subject of this narrative was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1823. Her maiden name was Mary Smith Kelsey. Her mother was a free colored woman, very light, and her father a white man—an Englishman of rank and culture. She was a very lovely child in person and manners, and as she grew up, developed traits of character which made her a universal favorite.

[Pg 6] When she was six years old, her mother sent her to Alexandria, for the purpose of attending school. She remained there in school about ten years, residing with her aunt, Mary Paine. Mrs. Paine occupied a house belonging to Mr. Rollins Fowle, and near his residence. This gentleman and his family were distinguished for their kindness to colored people. He frequently bought slaves who were in danger of being sold into bad hands, gave them their freedom, and set them up in business. John Paine, Mary's uncle, was one whom he freed in this way. Mary was a great pet in Mr. Fowle's family, and was treated almost like a daughter.

A schoolmate of hers, now residing in Providence, Rhode Island, says Mary was a very amiable girl, and a good student. They for a time attended a select colored school taught by a colored woman. Afterward they attended a colored school [Pg 7] taught by white teachers. The last teacher was Mr. Nuthall, an Englishman. He taught till a law of Congress enacted that the law of Virginia in relation to free colored people should prevail in the District of Columbia. This was several years before Alexandria was retroceded to Virginia. This law closed all colored schools

in the city. Mary was compelled to leave the school in consequence of being informed of as having come from Virginia.

While at school, Mary acquired a good English education, and, in addition to this, a knowledge of various kinds of needlework, and also dress-making. Her aunt was a devoted Christian, and no doubt had a very happy influence on Mary. Her mother also was converted when Mary was two or three years old. Under these influences she was early the subject of serious impressions. Though fond of general reading and study, there was no book she [Pg 8] loved so well as the Bible. This was her companion and text book, and she committed large portions of it to memory.

When sixteen years old, having finished her education, she returned to her mother, at Norfolk. Soon afterward, those religious elements which had existed from early childhood—grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength—became dominant by the grace of God, and asserted their power over her.

Near her residence was a garden, connected with a large old mansion, between Fenchurch and Church Streets. In this garden was a dilapidated family tomb. It was impressed on her mind that she must go into this tomb to pray. At the dead hour of night she sought this gloomy abode of moldering coffins and scattered bones. As she entered and knelt in the death cell, she trembled with a fear which her prayers could not dissipate. Quickly [Pg 9] and stealthily she retraced her steps, and hurried back to her home. Yet the next night, this girl of sixteen had the courage to seek the dismal place again, and the next night yet again, with similar results. But at length light broke upon the darkness of the tomb, and it became a place of delightful communion with her Lord; whence it was afterward called "Mary's parlor." At the midnight hour, she left the tomb, and broke the silence of the night with a jubilant song, fearless of the patrol. The song was this strain of Watts, in which many a saint has poured forth his soul:—

"Stand up, my soul, shake off thy fears, And gird the gospel armor on; March to the gates of endless joy, Where Jesus, thy great Captain, 's gone.

"Hell and thy sins resist thy course, But hell and sin are vanquished foes; Thy Jesus nailed them to the cross, And sung the triumph when he rose.

[Pg 10] "Then let my soul march boldly on, Press forward to the heavenly gate; There peace and joy eternal reign, And glittering robes for conquerors wait.

"There shall I wear a starry crown, And triumph in almighty grace; While all the armies of the skies Join in my glorious Leader's praise."

This strain fell on the waking ears of ladies in the house adjacent to the tomb, and they inquired, "What sweet music is that? Who is serenading at this hour?" Little did they know the spirit-promptings of that song.

Soon after this, Mary went to visit some friends in Hampton. As she entered the yard, and approached the house, she sang another expressive hymn of Watts:—

"Firm as the earth thy gospel stands, My Lord, my Hope, my Trust; If I am found in Jesus' hands, My soul can ne'er be lost.

[Pg 11] "His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of his sheep;
All whom his heavenly Father
gave
His hands securely keep.

"Nor death nor hell shall e'er remove
His favorites from his breast;
Safe on the bosom of his
love
Shall they for ever rest."

Her friends opened the door at the sound of the tender music, and as they looked on her face, and listened to her song, they were overcome, and could not restrain their emotions.

Soon afterward, she united with the First Baptist Church in Norfolk, on Bute Street. The pastor was Rev. James A. Mitchell, who served the church from the time of Nat Turner's insurrection till his death, about 1852. He was emphatically a good man, and a father to the colored people—a very Barnabas, "son of consolation" indeed. A considerable portion of [Pg 12] his church were colored people, and he would visit them at their houses, take meals with them, and enter into their affairs, temporal and spiritual, with a true and zealous heart. He never loved slavery; his private opinion was against it, but he was obliged to be cautious in the expression of his sentiments. He endured great trials for this proscribed class, and was almost a martyr in their behalf, his pastorate having begun just after Nat Turner's insurrection, which caused great persecution and restriction of privileges. But the Lord was with him, and made him to triumph.

Mary's mother says that she delighted to visit the poor in Norfolk, and especially the aged. A very old man, in the suburbs, often came to her door, and never went empty away; and frequently at evening she would go and carry him warm tea, and in the winter she brought him wood in small armfuls. When he died, he said he [Pg 13] wanted Mary to have all that belonged to him. Though he was scarcely worth three cents, it was a rich heart gift.

Her Christian course was marked with usefulness. Self-denying devotion to the glory of God and the good of others characterized her earlier, as her later career. A deacon of the church on whom the writer called when recently in Norfolk, says she had a strong desire for the conversion of souls, and was often found exhorting them to repentance. Other members of the church bore the highest testimony to her uniform Christian deportment.

In 1847, Mary's mother was married to Thompson Walker, and bought a house in Hampton, where they resided until the town was burned by the rebels in 1861. Though sustaining herself by her needle, Mary found time for many labors of love. Among other things, she originated a benevolent society, called the "Daughters of [Pg 14] Zion," designed for ministration to the poor and the sick. It is still in existence.

Her house, like that of Mary and Martha of old, was a place of spiritual resort. There the pastor, deacons, and other leading members of the church found congenial society. She early began the exercise of her gifts as a teacher. At that time, fifteen years ago, she had among her pupils Thompson Walker, her stepfather, William Thornton, and William Davis, all now able and eloquent exhorters. She was afterward of great service to others, who are now efficient exhorters and members of the church. Up to the time of the burning of Hampton, she was engaged in instructing children and adults, through her shrewdness and the divine protection eluding the vigilance of conservators of the slave law, or, if temporarily interfered with, again commencing and prosecuting her labors of love with cautious fearlessness, [Pg 15] and this in the midst of the infirmities attending a feeble constitution.

In 1851, Mary was married to Thomas Peake, formerly a slave, but afterward a free man, light colored, intelligent, pious, and in every respect a congenial companion, with whom she lived happily till her decease.

The bereaved husband bears affectionate testimony to the strong mind and sound judgment which dwelt in that feeble frame. He loves to speak of his indebtedness to her richly stored mind for much of his knowledge of the Bible. At his request, she would sit for hours and relate Bible history. Others of our leading brethren also gratefully acknowledge that they have drawn largely from the same storehouse of biblical and varied knowledge.

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CHAPTER II.

Commencement of the Mission at Fortress Monroe.—Flight of the Rebels from Hampton.—Burning of the Town.—The Place reoccupied by Freedmen.

About the first of September, 1861, the writer commenced the mission at Fortress Monroe, under the auspices of the American Missionary Association, and was quartered in a building called the *Seminary*. Three months before this, the Union troops entered Hampton from Old Point. The exciting scenes connected with this event have been narrated to me by eye-witnesses. Among these troops were Duryea's Zouaves, called by the people "red men," from the color of their dress.

The utmost consternation seized the inhabitants of Hampton, when they found the Union troops were approaching. Many[Pg 17] of the colored people even were in a state of suspense. All kinds of stories had been told in regard to what the Yankees would do with them. Yet hope predominated over fear. They could hardly believe that the Yankees meant them any harm. But unmitigated fear filled the breasts of the secessionists. There had been loud boasts of what they would do; but when the red trowsers approached, their bravery all ran down into their nimble feet. The battery of several large guns which they had planted, and which might have done great mischief to the Union troops, had they been bravely manned, was drawn off. In their confusion, the bridge was first fired, and then the fire extinguished. Men, women, and children ran screaming in every direction, crying, "They come! they come! What shall we do?"

Here is a man within doors, gun in hand, pacing the floor in consternation,[Pg 18] ever and anon rushing to the window, and casting a frightened glance in the direction of the road from the fort, till he espies the Turk-like looking forms, moving "double quick," when he darts from the house, screaming, "They are coming! they are coming!" Off he flies, with the fleetness of fear, and in a few moments is seen no more.

But in one house there are two individuals, fearless and calm: Mrs. Peake and her little daughter Daisy sit alike unalarmed; the one in child-like faith, the other in child-like simplicity. Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Peake's mother, is in a neighbor's house. Some time previous, the lady of the

house, an intimate friend, having great confidence in sister Walker's prayers, said to her, "Sally, you must pray harder."

"Oh," said she, "I do pray as hard as I can."

"How do you pray, Sally?"

[Pg 19] "I pray that the Lord's will may be done."

"You don't pray right, Sally," said one of them; "you must pray for Jeff. Davis."

"Oh," said she, "I pray as well as I can, and as hard as I can. I am praying all the time."

"That's right," said the other; "pray on, Sally—your prayer will surely be heard. You can't pray any better prayer than you do. Pray that the Lord's will may be done: I am sure it is the Lord's will that the Yankees should not come here to disturb us; and I have faith to believe they will not. Pray on, Sally; pray as hard as you can."

"I will, ma'am."

Time passed on; and now, on that fearful morning, just after the sun has peeped above the horizon, lo, the Yankees! The strong faith above expressed fails the possessor; and she, who would scarcely have [Pg 20] set foot on the ground for very delicacy, and who would not have been seen riding out, unless in a fine carriage, drawn by fine horses, elegantly harnessed, is now heard calling for any old horse or mule, and any rickety wagon or cart, with rope harness—any thing—any thing to take her out of the reach of the Yankees! Masters and mistresses are now turned fugitives.

Here is one of many interviews between masters and slaves.

"What's the matter, master?"

"Oh, the Yankees are coming!"

"Are they? are they? What shall I do, master?" with affected tokens of fear.

"Get out of the town as soon as you can."

"Oh, master, I'm afraid to leave the house. Oh, those Yankees! Do you think they will hurt me?"

[Pg 21] "Yes, they'll take you and sell you off to Cuba. Perhaps they'll kill you."

"Will they, master?"

"Yes, I tell you; why don't you leave the town, you rascal?"

"Oh, master, I don't know what to do. You an't a-going to leave us for the Yankees to catch; are you?"

"Yes, I'm off, and you better be off with yourself—if you don't I'll shoot you."

"Oh, master, don't shoot me—don't leave me!"

"There they come!"

"Where, master, where? where?"

"I can't stop—good by—you better be off!"

But Tony laughs in his sleeve, and says, with upturned eyes, "I'm not afraid of the Yankees! Bless God, old master's gone—hope he'll never come back any more!"

[Pg 22] The Zouaves, on "double quick," approach nearer, and up rides one of the secessionists, in hot haste.

"What's the matter, master? What's the matter?" inquires an intelligent negro.

"Oh, matter enough, you villain. You brought all this trouble on us. I am disappointed in you; I thought you would stick by us; but you desert your best friends in extremity. You won't find those Yankees what you expect."

"Oh, master, won't you stay and protect us?"

"No; good by, you villain. I'm out of town, and so you had better be, very quick." And on he flies.

The Zouaves are now crossing the bridge,—now they enter the town,—and as they pass through street after street, with hats off, they bow politely to the colored people, who cheer them from doors and windows.[Pg 23] Now every fear is dissipated. Colored knees are bent, and colored lips praise the Lord. The hope that had all along predominated over fear is more than met, and the town is full of gladness. The tidings spread, and the place is soon thronged with colored people from the country around.

But how different with the white inhabitants! Go with me to the Sinclair estate—a mile or two north of the town. One of the officers rides up to the house, and says,—

"Do you own this place?"

"Yes."

"Well, deliver up all your horses."

Sam Simpson, the colored foreman, says, "Boys, bring up the horses."

"Oh, sir, spare an old man!"

"Hurry out those horses!"

"Oh, Sam, stand by me! Oh, dear, I shall die! Don't leave me! Don't leave me!"

[Pg 24] Poor old man! His ill-gotten riches are taking wings; the day of retribution has come upon him, and, in spite of a sense of its justice, we can not withhold our pity.

The colored people were soon set to work in constructing the battery in Hampton, under the superintendence of Mr. Pierce, of the Massachusetts regiment, since then superintendent of the Port Royal cotton culture. They worked with a will, so that he was obliged to suspend labor during the heat of the day, lest they should over-exert themselves. After a month had elapsed, the

battle of Big Bethel was fought, and *not* won; and soon after, the disastrous defeat and flight of Bull Run occurred.

To reënforce the army of the Potomac a large part of the troops at Fortress Monroe were ordered away. General Butler, concluding that he had not sufficient[Pg 25] force to hold Hampton, ordered it to be evacuated. He gave a week's notice to the colored people to leave, and find refuge on the other side of the bridge. But many of them delayed too long, and were able to move but a part of their goods; in consequence of which they suffered serious loss.

Among these was Mr. Peake. He lost a large part of his furniture, as well as his two houses. The order of the rebel General Magruder to fire the place was a gross exhibition of vandalism, without the justifiable plea of military necessity. The incendiary work began on the west side of the village, and spread toward the wharves. Hemmed in by the conflagration on one side, and our firing on the opposite shore, many of the executors of the order fell dead or wounded, and were consumed by the voracious flames. Those who witnessed it said it was an appalling sight.

[Pg 26] The evacuation took place on the 7th and the conflagration on the 8th of August. I arrived about a month afterward, and on visiting Hampton, in company with the provost marshal, Captain Burleigh, I found only about half a dozen houses that had escaped. One large house had had its floor fired, but the fire had mysteriously gone out, without doing much damage. A large new building, a little out of town, was also standing uninjured. But the most of the village was a charred ruin; the unsightly chimneys, and a few more or less dilapidated walls, surviving to tell the story of what had been.

Thus the place remained in abandoned isolation during the winter. But with the beginning of spring, the progress of our arms opened Hampton to reoccupation. It was thought proper that those who, during the winter, had been confined in large houses, overcrowded, should at once[Pg 27] build up the ruins, and provide themselves homes. To this end, application was made for an appropriation of government lumber for past services. Some lumber was received in this way, and the evacuation of the camps by the soldiers, who had winter quarters here, furnished still more.

Quite a large number of neat cottages have already been built. I encouraged the people to build these small tenements on lots belonging to the most decided rebels, hoping that, if not claimed by former owners, these homesteads would be given to the occupants by government. Thus Hampton is becoming quite a thriving, free settlement, supported by fishing, oystering, huckstering, artisanship, gardening, and farming. Colored people have settled on farms vacated by owners, and will do well in keeping dairies, and[Pg 28] cultivating the land, and gathering its fruit, if not molested.

The old court-house walls, that survived the fire, have been inclosed for a church and school house. The work was done by colored mechanics. It seems fit that this place, where injustice has been sanctioned by law, should be converted into a sanctuary of justice, righteousness, and free education.

We consider that we are here trying the very highest experiment with ex-slaves. They are here emphatically "turned loose," and are shifting for themselves,—doing their own head-work and hand-work. It is not to be expected that on the "sacred soil of Virginia" this experiment should be carried out without encountering difficulties; but we feel it to be a thing of blessed interest to

follow as Providence leads, and do the work of faith and love,[Pg 29] leaving the result with him. There is inspiration in the reflection that we are doing a representative work, and whatever the issue, the work will not be burned up, nor the workers permitted to suffer essential loss. We know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

[Pg 30]

CHAPTER III.

Opening of Religious Services and Schools.—Mrs. Peake a Teacher.—Singing in the Schools.—Christmas Festival.

The religious and educational part of the mission has been one of blessedness and promise. And in this, as in everything else, I have aimed to teach self-development. In connection with the gathering of the people in religious meetings, I proposed to commence Sabbath and week-day schools, with such teachers as I had at hand. Meanwhile, some of the children of the vicinity, getting perhaps some hint of my intention, or prompted by an impulse from on high, called on Mrs. Peake, and requested her to teach them, as she had taught the children in Hampton.

It was with much gratification that I[Pg 31] learned this request. I soon found from observation, as well as information, that we had in her a teacher of the choicest spirit, and of peculiar qualifications. She was happy in having pupils as ready to learn as to request instruction. Her school numbered at first only about half a dozen, but in a few days she had between fifty and sixty. These scholars were found to have generally very fair intellectual capabilities, and a few evinced quite rare talents. Among these was her own little daughter, five years old, named Hattie, but familiarly called by the pet name of Daisy. She learned to read simple lessons fluently in a very short time. Others also exhibited a precocity which from day to day rewarded and stimulated the ardor of this devoted teacher.

Mrs. Peake was not satisfied with the ordinary routine of the week-day school room, but felt that the teacher of a mission[Pg 32] school should aim to educate the children for eternity as well as for time. She found great assistance in the primer, catechism, and other elementary religious books, with which she had been furnished. She felt that the teachings of the week-day school ought to be largely preparatory to the rehearsals of the Sabbath school. What an impression for good would be made upon the rising generation, were this course universally pursued!

Mrs. Peake deeply realized that every undertaking, and especially that of training the young, should be begun and continued with prayer. She not only prayed with her pupils, but taught them to pray. Having a rich store of scriptural knowledge, and feeling its worth, and the importance of simplifying it to the young, in order to awaken their interest, she bestowed special attention on catechetical instruction. Not satisfied with having[Pg 33] Scripture truths committed to memory, she explained and inculcated them, with line upon line and precept upon precept, drawn from her own knowledge and experience. I can not think that this spiritual instruction interfered in the

least with the other, but rather was a handmaid to it, furnishing a pleasant as well as profitable variety, awakening and developing heart and mind at once.

Mrs. Peake also considered singing an important part of a right education. Among the favorite hymns first learned and sung in her school were, "I want to be an angel," "There is a happy land," "Around the throne of God in heaven," "Here we meet to part again," "In heaven we part no more," and others of kindred spirit, so familiar in the Sabbath schools at the North. How ardent was her desire to win the young intellect and affections for Jesus and heaven! With strict appropriateness[Pg 34] may we apply to her the poet's language,—

"And as a bird each fond endearment tries, To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies, She tried each art, reproved each dull delay, Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

While Mrs. Peake attached prime importance to the training of the rising generation, she felt that great improvement might be made among the adults. This view inspired her action from the first in Hampton, and with a blessed result, that is now apparent to all. She was accordingly very ready to gratify the desire of a number of adults for an evening school, notwithstanding her increasing infirmities. The result is, that several, who scarcely knew the alphabet before, now begin to read with considerable readiness.

In these multiplied labors, she exhibited a martyr spirit, of the true type. Often when she was confined to her bed, her[Pg 35] pupils would be found around her, drawing knowledge as it were from her very life. Again and again did Dr. Browne, brigade surgeon, who concerned himself for her like a brother, advise her to consider her weakness, and intermit her exhausting duties. The scene of these labors was the Brown Cottage, near the seminary, fronting on Hampton Roads. The school room was the front room, first story. Her own family apartment was the front room, second story. It will ever be a place about which precious memories will linger.

It was proposed that, on Christmas day, the children of the school should have a festival. All the week previous, they were busy, with their teacher, in preparations and rehearsals. A large room on the first floor of the seminary was decorated with evergreens for the occasion, and at one end a platform was constructed. At an early hour in the evening, the room was crowded[Pg 36] with colored children and adults, and soldiers and officers. The programme opened with the singing of "My country, 'tis of thee." Chaplain Fuller read the account of the nativity of Christ. Dr. Linson prayed. Then the children discoursed very sweet music in solo, semi-chorus, and chorus, and at intervals spoke pieces in a very commendable manner, considering that it was probably the first attempt of colored children in the South.

Little Daisy, (Mrs. Peake's only child,) about five years old, was the acknowledged star of the evening. She sang very prettily in solo, and also in connection with the chorus. She sang alone the whole of the hymn, "I want to be an angel."



LITTLE DAISY.

I spoke of the contrast between the present and the past. A year ago, *white* children in Hampton could enjoy a scene of this kind, but *colored* children were excluded. But now times have changed. [Pg 37]The white man's child is away, and the colored man's child is on the stage, and swells the choral song. And this is but a miniature picture of what will be. The present is prophetic of the future. The few hundred children about Fortress Monroe, now gathered into schools, after the pattern of this first school, are types of one million of children throughout the sunny South, on whom the sunlight of knowledge is yet to shine.

After the concert exercises, the members of the school and others repaired to the Brown Cottage. Here we were conducted into the school room, which, like the concert room, was tastefully decorated with evergreens; and we filed around a long table laden with refreshments, and surrounded with Christmas trees, loaded with good things, all gotten up spontaneously by, and at the expense of, the colored people in the neighborhood. The viands[Pg 38] were partaken of with a relish, and by unanimous consent it was declared a merry Christmas of the right type; the children sang, "Merry Christmas to all! Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas to all!"

CHAPTER IV.

Failing of Health.—Religious Joy.—Farewell Messages.—Death.—Funeral.—Conclusion.

After the exciting scenes of the Christmas festival, Mrs. Peake's health sensibly declined, and in a week or two she was obliged to suspend, and soon to give up entirely, the charge to which she had clung with such tenacity. I visited her frequently, and was the bearer of clothing and other tokens from friends at the North. Every thing in our power was done to cheer her, and never were ministerings more cordially bestowed, or more gratefully received and richly repaid. To visit her had always been a privilege, but the privilege was doubly precious during her last illness. To see how a frail woman,[Pg 40] with an exquisitely nervous temperament, could deliberately and calmly bid farewell to family, pupils, and friends, and yield herself into her Father's hands, to pass through the ordeal of sickness and death, was a privilege and a blessing.

In her presence I was a learner, and, under the inspiration of her words and example, obtained new strength for fresh endeavors in the cause of God and humanity. In one of my visits, she told me that I must give her love to the committee in New York, and all the friends of the mission; that she had had a bright vision of her Saviour, and he had assured her that the cause would triumph; that we were sowing seed which would spring up and become a tree, to overspread the whole earth; that we should be a great blessing to this down-trodden people, and they would fulfill a glorious destiny. "Oh, yes," said she, "brother Lockwood, you[Pg 41] will succeed, for Jesus has told me so this morning."

For two weeks previous to her death, she seemed to be in the "land of Beulah," on the "mountains of the shepherds," where, like Bunyan's pilgrim, she could clearly descry the promised land. She had a strong desire to depart and be with Christ, which was far better than even his most intimate earthly visits. Again and again, as I called to see her, she assured me that she had had a fresh visit from her Saviour, and he had told her that where he was she should be, and she would be like him when she should see him as he is. She knew not where in the universe heaven might be, but where her Saviour was, there would be her heaven, for she would be with him.

Her constantly increasing cough and expectoration, though not attended with much pain, were, as usual, accompanied[Pg 42] with uneasiness, want of sleep, and great weakness, which made her frequently request prayer that she might have patience to bear all without a murmur, and await her Father's will. She wanted to say, with the feelings of Job, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. I know that my Redeemer liveth."

At one time, her symptoms seemed more favorable, and I expressed a hope of her recovery. "No," said she; "I have taken leave of my family, and of every thing on earth, and I would rather go, if it be God's will; only I want to wait patiently till he comes to call me." Her husband and mother told me that, during the previous night, she had bidden them all farewell, and left farewell messages for her school, and the church, and all her friends. She had thus set her house

in order, to die, or, rather, to live a diviner life, and she was waiting the summons home. She said that[Pg 43] she felt like a little child in her Father's arms; and if, by lifting a pebble, she could hold back her spirit, she would not do it.

Several days before her death, she requested me to sing "The Christian's Home in Glory," or "Rest for the Weary"—a hymn, with its tune, dear to her for itself and for its associations. As I repeated the chorus, she exclaimed, again and again, with great tenderness and emphasis, "Rest, rest, rest! Oh, brother Lockwood, there I shall rest, rest, rest! This weary head shall rest on my Saviour's bosom."

When I had sung the last stanza,—

"Sing, oh, sing, ye heirs of glory, Shout your triumph as you go,"—

she burst out in an ecstasy that seemed as if the spirit would break away from the body, "Oh, brother, I shall sing! I shall shout! Won't we sing? Won't we shout? Yes, we shall—we shall sing and shout!"

[Pg 44] On Saturday morning, February 22, she was in a very happy frame of mind, and said that she had had precious visits from her Saviour; he had told her that he was coming soon, and would fulfill her heart's desire in taking her to him. Her mother said, that during the previous night she had been constantly reaching up, and sometimes she would cry out, with great earnestness, "Do not leave me, dear Jesus."

She requested me to sing for her, and I sung, "The Shining Shore," and "Homeward Bound." During the singing of the last stanza of the latter song, she was filled with joy.

"Into the harbor of heaven now we glide, We're home at last! Softly we drift o'er its bright silver tide, We're home at last! Glory to God! All our dangers are o'er; We stand secure on the glorified shore; Glory to God! we will shout evermore, We're home at last!"

[Pg 45] "Yes," she exclaimed, "home at last! Glory to God! Home at last! Oh, I shall soon be home—home—home at last!"

On the night of that day, about twelve o'clock, her waiting, longing spirit went home. Washington's birthday was her birthday to a higher life. After many a sleepless night, this last evening she was permitted to rest quietly, till the midnight cry struck upon her ear, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh!" It found her ready, with her lamp trimmed and burning. Calling for her mother, she threw herself into her embrace, as her spirit did into the embrace of her Saviour.

Just at midnight, on all the ships in Hampton Roads,—and which are so near us that the cry on shipboard is distinctly heard on shore,—the watchman cried aloud, as usual, "Twelve o'clock, and all's well!" The sound penetrated the sick[Pg 46] chamber, and the dying invalid apparently heard it. She smiled sweetly, and then breathed her last sigh, and entered upon that rest which remains for the people of God.

The next morning, which was the Sabbath, I called, and found her husband and mother bearing up under their bereavement with Christian fortitude. They could smile through their tears; though they wept, it was not as those who have no hope. In the services of the day, the bereaved were remembered in fervent, sympathizing prayer. We all felt sorely afflicted, and would have

grieved, but for the thought that our temporary loss was her eternal gain. In the evening, a prayer meeting was held till midnight in the room where her body lay; but all felt like saying, She is not here; her spirit is with her Father and our Father, her God and our God.

[Pg 47] On Monday, at eleven o'clock, a large concourse assembled at her funeral. We met in her school room, at the Brown Cottage, a place sweetened and hallowed by associations with her crowning labors, and thus a fit place for these leave-taking services. The occasion was one of mingled sorrow and joy. The services were begun by singing, according to her request, the familiar hymn,—

"I would not live alway,"—

to the tune of "Sweet Home," in which it is generally sung by the people here, with the chorus,—

"Home! Home! Sweet, sweet home! There's no place like heaven, there's no place like home!"

The impression was very thrilling. Chaplain Fuller, of the sixteenth Massachusetts regiment, offered prayer—praying fervently for the bereaved mother and [Pg 48] husband, and for little Daisy, who would one day realize more than now a mother's worth by her loss. We then sung, according to her request, her favorite hymn, "The Christian's Home in Glory," or "Rest for the Weary." I selected for my text Hebrews 4:9—"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." At the conclusion of the sermon the children sang,—

"Here we suffer grief and pain; Here we meet to part again; In heaven we part no more. Oh, that will be joyful, Joyful, joyful, joyful, Oh, that will be joyful, When we meet to part no more.

"*Little children* will be there, Who have sought the Lord by prayer, From every Sabbath school. Oh, that will be joyful, &c.

"*Teachers*, too, shall meet above, And our *pastors*, whom we love, Shall meet to part no more. Oh, that will be joyful," &c.

[Pg 49] The coffin was then opened, and we took the last, lingering look at a face whose heavenly lineaments I can never forget.

In long procession, in which her recent charge bore a prominent part, we accompanied her to her resting place. The place of her sepulture is about a hundred yards north of the seminary, on the bank of the inlet. A live-oak tree stands at her head, projecting its emblematic evergreen foliage over the sod-roofed tenement.

The departed selected, as a remembrance of her immortality, the 17th verse of the 118th Psalm, "I shall not die, but live." The thirty-nine years of her earthly existence were but the prelude to a life beyond the sky; and while her spirit survives the ravages of death, her name shall live in memory.

In this unpretending memoir may its[Pg 50] subject live again, and not in vain. May teachers gather from her example fresh inspiration, and the benevolent Christian fresh impulses in doing good. May they who enjoy advantages superior to those of her proscribed race, take heed lest the latter, by the better improvement of the little light enjoyed, rise up in the judgment and condemn them.

Let Sabbath scholars, and children of pious parentage and Christian education, who from earliest years have not only been taught to lisp the Saviour's name, but to read it, pity the slave child, shut out from such advantages, and give heed to instruction, lest, having more given and unimproved, they be beaten with many stripes. Let all who have an interest at the throne of grace remember little Daisy, and pray that she may walk in her mother's footsteps, as far as she followed Christ, only following more closely, attaining still[Pg 51] greater excellence, achieving still greater usefulness, and winning a still brighter crown of glory.

As the enlarging harvest field whitens into ripeness, may the Lord of the harvest send forth an increasing number of laborers. Oh, who will give ear to the echoing cry, "Come over and help us"? Come to the harvest work, and you too, with arms full of golden sheaves, shall shout the harvest home. Who will pay the hire of the laborers? Who will lend to the Lord the capital needful to secure the harvest in season and well? For such there shall be untold riches laid up in heaven. And who will sustain those who bear the burden and heat of the day, by the buoyancy of prayer? This is a work thrice blessed to all concerned.

[Pg 53]

APPENDIX.

MISSION TO THE FREEDMEN.

On the 8th of August, 1861, a letter was addressed to Major-General Butler, then in command at Fortress Monroe, Virginia, by the treasurer of the American Missionary Association, respecting the people whom he had denominated "contrabands." In this letter, the writer communicated to General Butler the wishes of some persons in the free states, that, as considerable embarrassment was felt by the public authorities with regard to the increasing numbers of colored persons who had fled and were fleeing for protection to the forts and camps of the United States, they should be sent into the free states to obtain employment. A prompt and courteous reply was received, and, in reference to the desire expressed, General Butler stated that the[Pg 54] "contrabands" would be protected; that many of them would be employed in government service; that there was land enough to cultivate in Virginia; and as the freedmen would never be suffered to return into bondage, there was no necessity for sending any of them to the Northern States.

The executive committee of the association, feeling highly encouraged by these assurances, at once determined to commence a mission at Fortress Monroe. Rev. Lewis C. Lockwood was commissioned as their first missionary to the freedmen. He repaired to Washington, where he received encouragement from the government, and recommendation to the commanding general,

Wool, who had succeeded General Butler. General Wool received him cordially, heartily approved the plan, and afforded him all needful facilities.

Mr. Lockwood conferred with the leading persons among the freedmen, investigated the condition and wants of the people, made arrangements for week-day and Sabbath meetings, organized week-day and evening schools, employed several of the most intelligent and gifted colored people as assistants, and through the committee in New York made urgent[Pg 55] appeals for clothing, &c., for the destitute, and also for additional missionaries and teachers.

The late lamented Mrs. Mary S. Peake was the first teacher employed. She continued to teach as long as her health permitted, and near to the time of her decease. Other teachers have been employed; chaplains in the army and pious soldiers have proffered their occasional services, and the religious meetings, Sabbath schools, and week-day schools, have been well attended. Mr. Lockwood labored there thirteen months, and then removed to another field. In his final report, he states that he had ministered to a congregation at Hampton, where the average attendance was four hundred; and to a congregation at Fortress Monroe, where the average attendance was about the same.

A day school was kept in a house, near Hampton, formerly the residence of Ex-President Tyler, which was wholly given up for the use of the freedmen. This school was subsequently removed to the old Court House at Hampton, which had been fitted up for the purpose, government furnishing a portion of the lumber. This school became the largest under the care of the freedmen's teachers,[Pg 56] and numbered at one time five hundred scholars. Among the ruins of Hampton, which had, at an early period of the rebellion, been burned by the rebels, the colored people erected rude cottages, the materials being gathered from the vacated camps, the deserted dwellings of fugitive slaveholders, &c.

Such of the freedmen as were not employed by government have obtained a living by fishing, oystering, huckstering, carting, washing, &c.

INTERESTING FACTS.

Many highly interesting facts have been communicated with regard to the freedmen—their natural endowments, their facility in acquiring knowledge in letters and arms, their industrial habits, their shrewdness in business transactions, their gratitude, their courage, their acquaintance with passing events, their confidence that the result of the rebellion will be the liberation of their people, and their piety. Some of these facts have been extensively published, and have been read with high gratification. It is thought that a few of these facts may add to the value of this little publication.



A "CONTRABAND" SCHOOL.

[Pg 57]

SCHOOLS FOR THE CHILDREN.

A young teacher at Hampton, Virginia, writes as follows: "When I first commenced the school here, I found the children such as slavery makes—quarrelsome, thievish, uncleanly in their persons and attire, and seemingly inclined to almost every species of wickedness; and it appeared to me that they were too far gone to be ever raised to any thing like intelligent children at the North. But I found that I had reckoned without my host in the persons of these children.

"At the end of the first week there was a decided improvement manifested, and in four weeks you hardly ever saw one hundred and fifty children more cleanly in their persons and apparel. Their lessons were, in most cases, quickly and correctly learned, and their behavior was kind and affectionate toward each other, while in singing the sweet little Sabbath school songs, I should

not hesitate to put them side by side with the best of our Sabbath-school scholars at the North. And they so fully appreciate my humble efforts in their behalf, that my table in the school room is loaded, morning and noon, with oranges,[Pg 58] lemons, apples, figs, candies, and other sweet things too numerous to mention, all testifying their love to me, although I can do so little for them."

Another teacher, at Beaufort, South Carolina, writes: "My school numbered about forty of the children. Most of them were very dirty and poorly dressed, all very black in color. A happier group of children I never expect to witness than those who composed my school: bright eyes, happy looks, kind and patient dispositions, made them look attractive to my eyes, though they were 'horribly black,' as some have called them, and very dirty at first. But they were so innocent, so despised by others, and withal so anxious to learn, that I felt a true sympathy for them.

"Their masters have kept them in darkness and degradation. This is only the result of slavery.

"They are very eager to learn. Every one wishes to be taught first; yet, unlike some white children, they are patient and willing to wait. They do not easily tire of study, but are very diligent in getting their lessons. I have known them to teach each other, or sit alone and drill over a lesson for two hours at a time.

[Pg 59] "Let me relate to you a little incident that will illustrate what I have just said. One day, at Beaufort, soon after we landed, while walking through the upper portion of the town, I heard a little voice saying the alphabet, while another wee voice, scarcely audible, was repeating it after the first. I looked quickly around to discover from whence the voice came; and what do you think I saw? Why, seated on the piazza of a large empty house were two of the blackest little negro children, one about seven, the other not more than three years old. The elder had his arm thrown lovingly around the almost naked form of the other, and with an open primer in the lap of one, they were at their study. An hour after, I returned by the same spot, and was both pleased and surprised to find them still at it. God bless the little ones!

"This desire, or rather eagerness, to learn to read, is manifested by all. I have stopped by the wayside many a time, and have immediately collected a group of old and young about me, and have made them repeat the alphabet after me slowly, letter by letter. They esteem it the greatest kindness I can show them, and as I turn to depart, the[Pg 60] fervent 'God bless you, massa,' 'Tank de Lord, massa,' reach my ears."

MORALS OF THE FREEDMEN.

After the mission had been established, one of the officers' wives remarked to another, "I do not miss my things nowadays."

Nearly all the church members had taken the temperance pledge.

"They have their vices," writes a northern physician on one of the plantations on Port Royal Island; "deception and petty thieving prevail. They are careless, indolent, and improvident. They have a miserable habit of scolding and using authoritative language to one another. All these vices are clearly the result of *slave education*, and will gradually disappear under improved

conditions.... If one is honest with them, and gets their confidence, the rest is easily accomplished."

MARRIAGE.

A very large portion, probably, at least, more than half of the "married" freed people, had been married only in slave fashion, by "taking up together," or living together by mutual agreement, without any marriage[Pg 61] ceremony. The missionary proposed to such that they should be married agreeably to the usages in the free states. The leaders of the colored people were conversed with, and they, without exception, agreed as to the propriety of the measure. One, now advanced in life, said, that when he proposed to his companion to go to a minister and be lawfully married, she replied, "Oh, what use will it be? Master can separate us to-morrow." But he coincided fully in the propriety of the proposed course.

Mr. Lockwood, after preaching on the sanctity of the marriage relation, proceeded to unite in wedlock several couples, among whom were some who had lived together for years. He gave each of the parties a certificate, in handsome form, which they seemed to prize very highly. It appeared to have a most beneficial effect upon the parties themselves, and the whole population.

NATIVE ELOQUENCE.

Not a few of the freedmen, though illiterate, exhibit remarkable powers of eloquence. The missionary, in describing the address of one of them, after a discourse by the former, says, "The address was a masterpiece.[Pg 62] It melted every heart. He appealed to the soldiers present who were in rebellion against God, striving to put down rebellion in this land, and asked them how they, who had been taught to read the Bible, and had learned the Lord's Prayer in infancy from a mother's lips, could stand in judgment, when a poor, despised, and inferior race, who, though denied the Bible, had been taught of God, and found their way to Christ, should rise up and condemn them. He then turned to his fellow 'contrabands,' and entreated them to embrace thankfully, and improve, the boon already given. He considered the present a pledge of the future—the virtual emancipation of fifteen or eighteen hundred the promise of the emancipation of four millions. The Lord works from little to great."

CHURCH MEETING.

The missionary wrote: "Last Thursday I had an opportunity to observe the intellectual state of a considerable number of the brethren at a church meeting. I was surprised at their understanding and wisdom in regard to church order and propriety, and tone of discipline. As the church records had been[Pg 63] burned up in the church edifice at Hampton, I inquired how far any of them could recall their contents. One or two replied that they could almost repeat the church regulations from memory.

"In the discussion, high ground was taken in regard to the Sabbath, the temperance cause, and other matters of Christian morality. In discipline, stress was laid on the propriety and duty of private admonition, in its successive scriptural steps, before public censure. On this point one brother said he had privately admonished a neighbor of the impropriety of taking articles to the camp on the Sabbath, and he had acknowledged his fault, and promised amendment. The duty of

forgiving offenders, and undoing wrongs, was also insisted on. Several had been improperly excluded from church privileges through the influence of white power. It was, therefore, decided to-day that those who had the confidence of the church should be restored to church-fellowship unconditionally."

One of the members, and an aged leader, stated that he had on one occasion been seized by a white deacon, dragged down from the gallery, and threatened with thirty-nine[Pg 64] lashes, because there was a little of the Methodist in his composition, and he had "got happy and shouted in meeting."

On another occasion, William Davis concluded some remarks as follows: "I hope that all of you, old and young, will learn to read, as I did. When I was converted, I was anxious to learn to read God's book. I kneeled down by my book, [he here kneeled by the table,] and prayed that God would teach me to read it—if only a little, I would be thankful. And I learned, and you can if you will, for you have no one to hinder you, as I had. We should all show that we are worthy of freedom. Only educate us, and we will show ourselves capable of knowledge. Some say we have not the same faculties and feelings with white folks.... All we want is cultivation. What would the best soil produce without cultivation? We want to get wisdom. That is all we need. Let us get that, and we are made for time and eternity."

Transcriber's Note:

All spelling is as it appears in the original text. The frontispiece illustration has been moved to follow the title page, and the 'Little Daisy' illustration has been shifted slightly so that it is not in the middle of a paragraph.

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