

Historical
SKETCH
OF THE
Freedmen's Missions
OF THE
United Presbyterian Church,
1862-1904.



Printing Department Knoxville College,
1904.

Ralph W. McCreanahan

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NOTES AND INCIDENTS FROM THE DIARY OF REV. J. G. MCKEE.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.—[The following incidents are taken from an old book, in the custody of Knoxville College, with a brown back, time-stained leaves and ink fading so fast that if they are preserved they must be put in other form. The notes are from the pen of Rev. J. G. McKee just as he made them at the close of his busy days, and we give them just as he wrote them, without comment or apology.]

RATHER FIERCE.

A very general feeling was expressed by a Nashville lady (?) who said, "Its a fine pass we have come to. The time was when the niggers carried the white childrens' books and dinner and waited outside to bring them home. Now we(whites) have no schools and these yankees are opening free schools for niggers. I sometimes feel as if I could tear their hearts out."

A SAD DILEMA.

To our appeal for tents to shelter the fugitives, Gov. Johnson replied, "Anything that will tend to promote their comfort will only increase the number flocking in and exasperate still more their haters and persecutors—thus increasing their miscry."

"NO BETTER BUSINESS."

As we passed along the streets, women would call to one another in such language as the following, "There he goes, that low-lived Yankee that can find no better business than teaching niggers." Stones were thrown at us on the street, and also into our school through the windows.

ENCOURAGING.

Within sight of my window where I write, are families whom I picked up when I found them in the snow.—destitute of everything and apparently shiftless in the winter of 1863-4; now in May 1865 they are in comfortable little houses of their own building, surrounded by neat vegetable gardens, and independent as kings—more so probably.

MOSES' LOGIC.

After preaching in the hovel of Moses Battle one evening, and sitting down for a social chat, I said,—"Moses they tell me that when the slaves are freed

they are so lazy and thriftless they will lie around and starve—!" "Dunno what for sah, anybody tink dat. De culled folks, what been a keepin up the country. When da had to work all day for de masters, da work o'nights and Sundays to make a leetle something for da selves. Now wen its all day to da selves dunno wat fer da lie down and starve. If da do just let 'em."

ONE DAY IN THE QUARTERS.

During the dreadful storm of Jan. 1864, I started out at dawn directing Aggie Wallace and Ada Arbutnot to follow, and meet me at a house in Crawford street. I carried a bag full of children's clothing: on my way I found a family of children shivering in an open shed: no wood could be purchased at any price, the streets were a sheet of ice, and for some days the country people had brought no wood to market. I went back to the schoolhouse, poured out the clothes and filled the bag with short wood, belonging to our school and carried it to the perishing family, went back for the clothing and proceeded to the appointed place, deposited the bag with orders for none to open it till the ladies should come. I then went from hut to hovel around the vicinity selecting the most naked, destitute children and directing them to the point for distribution. Supposing I had invited as many as could be supplied, I repaired to the place for distribution, and found not only the large room crowded, but the yard around the door with the most miserable looking victims of poverty I have ever witnessed. Many little bare feet were standing on the ice and snow and some too small to walk were carried. Our ladies were busy fitting shoes on one, skirt on another, coat on another, and dividing the best they could and sending off those supplied to make room for others.

Another and another bag full were brought from our house, and distributed until our stock was exhausted and darkness closed our labors. A crowd of crying disappointed ones had to go unsupplied.

On our way home, the dilapidated appearance of an old log house, suggested that it must be occupied by refugees (colored) if occupied at all. Two families

tolerably comfortable—or rather not destitute—were there. Seeing a ladder and trap door we asked whether any one lived in the garrat. We crawled up, and stumbled upon something which proved to be five little children sinking into the stupor that cold and starvation produces. They were huddled together in the middle of the floor, and sitting there without light, fire or food, nor had they seen food or fire for twenty-four hours. They had burned their bedstead, eaten their last crust, and consigned themselves to their fate. Their mother was lying sick and helpless, and her child by her, in the only thing like a bed which they possessed. Their room had no chimney or fireplace. I bought all the wood I could coax a neighbor to sell for pity's sake, carried it under my arm, made a fire in a dutch oven, purchased some meal, and candle and bread and Aggie Wallen and Ada prepared them some warm food.

The storekeeper would not allow a bag or vessel to carry the meal in, so I carried it in a shawl. This day's work and its scenes are samples of many and for scenes of misery falls below many.

WHITE OR COLORED.

On the first day I opened the schools, I observed a well dressed *white* lady, as I supposed, (not having yet acquired a Southern discrimination of shades) sitting among the children. I supposed from her lady-like manner and address that she was some Northern officer's wife visiting the school. To my surprise I soon observed her follow my pointer and name the letters. I soon discovered that she was the mother of a large and respectable family of boys who were sent North for an education as they dared not be taught in Tennessee. The mother having the care of a family could not leave home for school and so waited in ignorance till God in His providence brought it to her door. This lady was sold by her own father to her present husband for \$1300. Her youngest child, Ida M. Napier was one of the most beautiful, if not absolutely the *most* beautiful creature I ever saw, and would of course by the laws of Tennessee, be a piece of merchandise had her mother not been freed, and a grand speculation she would have been in the Orleans market for a gentleman's(?) use.(?)