

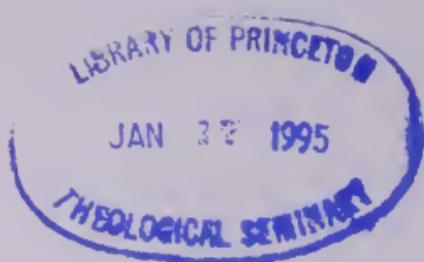
**THE  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
BISHOP L. H. HOLSEY**

**(Re-printed)**

With an Introduction by  
George E. Clary, Jr.  
Former Professor of History  
at Paine College, Augusta, GA

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY,  
SERMONS, ADDRESSES,  
AND ESSAYS

OF

BISHOP L. H. HOLSEY, D.D.,

SECOND EDITION.

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA:  
THE FRANKLIN PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO.  
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1899.



BISHOP L. H. HOLSEY, D.D.

## *Bishop Holsey's Hymn*

### O RAPTUREOUS SCENES.

Holsey-Hamilton

1. O rapturous scenes that wait the day,  
When Thou shall call me home,  
When I shall here no longer stay,  
No longer weep and moan.
2. Long has my heart looked up to Thee  
My Master and my King.  
No other hand can make me free,  
And to Thy bosom bring. ==
3. What wondrous grace is this that brings,  
My waiting soul to Thee,  
That makes me scorn all earthly things,  
That I may holy be?
4. Say, gracious Lord, where am I now?  
Am I Thy servant still?  
Shall flesh and blood my soul o'er throw?  
And set at naught Thy will?
5. Nay, but my soul shall rise and fly,  
To that bright world above;  
The heav'nly Canaan in the sky,  
The city of His love.
6. Hallelujah! the race is run!  
Eternal life is gained,  
My happiness is just begun,  
The crown of life obtained.

Note on stanza 2: the author knew what it meant to have a MASTER- both earthly and heavenly, and for him being made FREE had a powerful meaning.

NEW (1988)  
INTRODUCTION  
By George E. Clary, Jr.

This little booklet is a re-print of an interesting document that has long been out-of-print. When I came upon it in connection with my research into the early history of Paine College, I hoped someone would re-print it and make it available to the public. Now some twenty-five years later, I am trying to make that hope come true.

Bishop Lucius Henry Holsey, a noted Black bishop in Georgia Methodism, appeared in the 1916 *Who's Who in America as follows:*

**HOSLEY, Lucius Henry**, bishop; b. nr. Columbus, Ga., 1845; s. James and Louisa Wynn H.; attended Baptist Coll., Augusta, Ga., 1872; (D.D., Morris Brown Coll., and Paine Coll., 1900); m. Harriet A. Turner, of Sparta, Ga., Nov. 8, 1863. Ordained M.E. Ch., S., ministry, 1869; pastor in Georgia, 1869-73; founder of Paine Coll., Augusta, Ga.; consecrated bishop 1873. Author: Church Manual, 1892; Church Hymnal, 1892; Racial Problem, 1903; Autobiography, Sermons, Addresses and Essays 1903; Little Gems, 1905. Address: 335 Auburn Av., Atlanta, Ga. †

The book which Bishop Holsey published in 1898 contained some 300 pages. I am re-printing only the Autobiography with the complete Table of Contents. The sermons and essays are omitted. I have added one thing not in the book: Bishop Holsey's hymn "O RAPTUREOUS SCENES."

Appreciation is due Mrs. Millie Parker, Head Librarian at Paine College, for permission to copy her book.

Please correct the small but confusing typographical error in the middle of page 19. The name "Garrell" should be "Jarrell."

Most of the persons named by Bishop Holsey in his autobiography were Methodist leaders in Georgia. He was intimately associated with Bishop George Foster Pierce who was, without doubt, Georgia Methodism's most prominent leader during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods. Bishop Holsey and Bishop Pierce were instrumental in founding Paine College in Augusta.

During his youth and early manhood, Holsey was intimately associated with a man who was not a Methodist: Richard Malcolm Johnston (1822-1898), who was Holsey's master in the final days of slavery. Johnston was a graduate of Mercer University. Just before the Civil War he became a professor at the University of Georgia. He is a figure of some importance in Georgia literary history. Encouraged by his friend Sidney Lanier, he wrote *Dukesboro Tales*. During his later years he published an autobiography. I went through this autobiography hoping to find something about his former servant who had become a very prominent churchman in Georgia, but Johnston said nothing about his servants.

For further information about the life of Bishop Holsey, see John B. Cade, "HOLSEY - THE INCOMPARABLE," New York, 1964. Shortly before his death in 1920, Bishop Holsey wrote another Autobiography, which was not published, and which showed his age and the decline of his mental powers. I believe that Bishop Holsey's 1898 Autobiography, re-printed below, is worthy of being re-published. Certain sections of it, especially those dealing with his boyhood as a slave on the campus of the University of Georgia where he "felt an insatiable craving for some knowledge of books," and where he "determined to learn to read at all hazards," are gems. How many young men have lived on this University campus and never felt such cravings! This little book is worth reading.

## THE PAINE COLLEGE IDEAL

To love truth and to seek it above material things;

To ennoble and be ennobled by common fellowship;

To keep the energies of life at full tide;

To cultivate an appreciation of the beautiful;

To work well and play with zest;

To have an open, unprejudiced mind;

To live simply, practicing a reasonable economy;

To find joy in work well done;

To be an earnest disciple in the school of Him who brings the abundant life;

To work diligently for a better understanding of the white and colored races;

Such is the spirit and ideal of Paine College. To all who share this spirit and are eager for the pursuit of high things, we offer a hearty welcome.

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## PREFACE.

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This book is published with the hope of doing good in more ways than will be expedient to state at this time. It is intended not only to disseminate the truths and glory of the gospel system, but also, as far as possible, to inspire the Negro to think, and to encourage investigation, literary advancement and authorship by men of my race.

The sermons, essays, etc., are selected from what I have been preaching and writing for the last decade. Originally, the sermons were not designed for publication, but for private use. The lectures and essays, with few exceptions, were designed for the public, and most of them have appeared in the public prints. I have written as I have thought, always following what seemed to be the truth, the conclusions of others, save the inspired Word, to the contrary notwithstanding.

Rev. Prof. John W Gilbert, A.B., A.M., of The Paine Institute, is the immediate cause of the appearance of the book upon the arena of thought and action. Often he has urged me to publish a book of sermons for the sake of helping the church and race of which I am a representative. He has gone so far as to become sponsor for its publication. Also, he has, in collaboration with Rev. Geo. Williams Walker, D.D., President of The Paine Institute, read the manuscript and corrected the proof. Gladly do I take this opportunity of thanking these two distinguished scholars for the labor which they have so patiently and willingly bestowed upon these pages. I am incapable of expressing the high appreciation and esteem which their labor upon this book begets. Their labor, of course, was confined to the mechanical make-up of the

PREFACE.

book. For its doctrines and sentiments I am solely and independently responsible.

Twenty per cent. of the net proceeds of the sale of this volume I shall give to The Paine Institute.

If by this book the kingdom of Christ and the uplift of mankind are promoted even in the slightest degree, my prayers will have been abundantly answered.

THE AUTHOR.

*Atlanta, Ga., March 31, 1898.*

Original (1898)

## INTRODUCTION.

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I take real pleasure in introducing this volume of sermons to the public. Not that a volume of sermons is a rarity, but the present one occupies in several respects a unique position, in that it represents the production of an ex-slave, who without the aid of school, and, despite untoward circumstances, exemplifies what aspirations the missionaries to the slave awakened and that civil law could not put down. This pleasure is enhanced by an acquaintance with its author for fourteen years that has endeared him to my heart as an honored friend.

Bishop Lucius H. Holsey was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. He represents a faithful product of the missionary zeal of this church that was awakened by Bishop Capers in founding the missions to the slaves. His fidelity to trust and zeal for the salvation of souls caused him to be appointed a local preacher before emancipation. So that when the changed conditions that followed in the wake of the civil war came upon the church he was an active exponent of that conservative force that resulted in the organization of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Not only is the Bishop one of the organizers of his church, but he has ever been promotive of its highest and best interests, and the source by far of its public documents. He has supervised the editorial work of all his church's literature, compiling its hymn book, discipline, manual of the discipline, etc. He discerns in slavery a providential blessing to both white and black—a harsh measure to bring the ignorant Negro in contact with the educated Caucasian. He as firmly regards emancipation as the very best measure for

## INTRODUCTION.

the development of the highest interest alike for the white man and the black. His views are to be seen in his autobiography and in his recent address delivered before many of our annual conferences.

Deprived of the advantages of the school room, he has been a close student of men and nature. He gives us a partial insight to the manful effort he put forth to educate himself as best he could. We see in his autobiography what books he read. What influence these books had upon him is seen in many of his sermons. He was in a situation to appreciate the great need of school training. He has for years represented the foremost demands and zeal of educational endeavor in the interest of his own church. He presented the first plans for a school for the youth of his church which developed into The Paine Institute. He was the first colored man to give money to the erection of such a school. While Rev. W. C. Dunlap, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was Commissioner of Education, just before Rev. W. M. Hayes, of the same church became commissioner, Bishop Holsey, by advice of Bishop E. R. Hendrix, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, went before the Missouri Conference of the same church, and presenting the claims of The Paine Institute, collected between three and four hundred dollars for a much needed building. Thus providentially thrust out he kept on before the conferences of this church until he had collected about \$3,000 from only a few of the conferences. As it was largely through his influence that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was aroused to the demand of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church for Christian education of her children, so it was eminently fit for the burden of awakening a deeper enthusiasm in the educational work to devolve upon him.

Therefore, at the urgent solicitation of the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, backed by appointment and request of the Board of Trus-

## INTRODUCTION.

tees of The Paine Institute, the Bishop went before this church with an appeal for \$25,000 to erect a building at this school to be known as the Haygood Memorial Hall. He is not in any wise a commissioner of education, but at the urgent solicitation of his brethren is actively asking money for the erection of this hall. As if this were not enough he contributes a handsome per cent. of the sale of this volume to the erection of the Haygood Memorial Hall.

Bishop Holsey is the best known Bishop of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church. He has represented his church on several occasions, both by pen and person. In the New York Independent his church has been presented to the public by articles from his pen. At the Ecumenical Conference in London, he represented his church as her chosen delegate. His appeal to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in behalf of a school for the youth of his church resulted in the establishment and maintenance of The Paine Institute, at Augusta, Georgia.

Bishop Holsey is an eloquent preacher whose mind has a decidedly philosophical trend. He has appeared before many large gatherings of the people, sometimes made up wholly of white persons, as preacher, lecturer, orator. In each sphere he has acquitted himself well and brought about most beneficial results. He is the Munsey of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.

Without further delay I present this book to the public. Whatever is found in it that is helpful and praiseworthy attribute to the heart and mind of its author; whatever of shortcoming or imperfection, attribute to the lack of education, training and culturing development.

GEORGE WILLIAMS WALKER.

President

The Paine Institute

1884 - 1911

AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
BISHOP L. H. HOLSEY.

---

I was born in Georgia, near Columbus, in 1842, and at that time was the slave of James Holsey, who was also my father. He was a gentleman of classical education dignified in appearance and manner of life, and represented that old antebellum class of Southern aristocracy who did not know enough of manual labor to black their own shoes or saddle their own horse. Like many others of his day and time he never married, but mingled, to some extent, with those females of the African race that were his slaves—his personal property. My mother was named Louisa, and was of pure African descent. She was of fascinating appearance and comely parts. Her father was named "Alex," and was an African of the Africans. He was short, thickset, and of a stubborn and massive build. He lived to be nearly a hundred years of age. So far as I know, all his children were daughters, of whom my mother was the youngest. She was an intensely religious woman, a most exemplary Christian, and belonged to the M. E. Church, South. She had fourteen children, myself being the oldest. I lived with her until about six years of age, when my father died, and I became the property of Mr. T. L. Wynn, who lived in Sparta, Ga. Mr. Wynn was my second owner. I served him as body servant until 1857 when he died. A few days before his death he called me to his bed and told me that he was going to die, and

wanted me to choose one of two of his intimate friends as my master. He named the two friends and I chose Col. R. M. Johnston, with whom I lived until the emancipation of the slaves. As he was a very kind man to his slaves, I remained on the plantation with him one year after the emancipation. From the fall of 1857 until the emancipation I was his house servant, and looked after his domestic interests in general. He had great confidence in me and trusted me with money and other valuables. In all things I was honest and true to him and his interests. Though young, I felt as much interest in his well-being as I have felt since in my own. I made it a special point never to lie to him or deceive him in any way. I felt that I could not afford to be false even to those who appeared to be my enslavers and oppressors, and I have never regretted this course in after years. The training that I received in the narrow house of slavery has been a minister of correction and mercy to me in all these years of struggle, trial, labor, and anxiety. I have no complaint against American slavery. It was a blessing in disguise to me and to many. It has made the negro race what it could not have been in its native land. Slavery was but a circumstance, or a link in the transitions of humanity, and must have its greatest bearing upon the future.

Col. Johnston, my last owner, had an interesting family of seven brilliant children and a brilliant wife. For them I have the best wishes and the highest esteem.

In 1867-68 I cultivated a cotton farm in Hancock county, Ga., on rented land. My wife and I labored to make an honest living. Assisted by two young men whom I hired, I made a competent living. My house was built of skinned pine poles and contained two large rooms and a hall. It was so constructed that every part of the spacious building had windows, so that I was out of doors while I was in doors. In my humble palace on a hill in the woods beneath the shade of towering pines

and sturdy oaks, I felt as a king whose supreme commands were "law and gospel" to my subjects. Here I dwelt for two years cultivating the cotton farm and preaching at the same time. This was in the years of 1868-'69. Prior to this in 1866 I farmed on the old plantation of Col. Johnston. My wife then "took in washing" and I ran "a one-horse farm." Col. Johnston, the owner of the place, conducted a large boarding school, and my wife was laundress for the students. By this combination of interests we made a "handsome living," and all was well.

From my youth I felt a call to preach the gospel, although I saw no opening for such a thing in the days of slavery; but still there was a hope and a lingering anticipation that somehow, in the divine arrangements, I would ultimately have an opportunity to proclaim God's truth. In the little church that stands beneath the oaks and cedars, in the village of Sparta, Ga., I was licensed to preach. It was in February, 1868, under the pastorate of Rev. A. J. Garrell, that I appeared before the Quarterly Conference. Rev. W. H. Potter, D.D., was the Presiding Elder. Bishop George F. Pierce being present, I had to be examined by him. He was a wonderful preacher, with wide influence, and august presence. Everybody loved, respected, and some almost adored him. Coming before such a high personage I was scared out of my wits, and all that I had previously known seemed to have taken the wings of the winds and fled away. But I was examined pretty closely, especially on the doctrines of the church, and the Bible, yet, somehow, I came out all right. In 1862 I was married to Miss Harriett A. Turner, a girl then fifteen years of age, who had been reared by Bishop Pierce, and given by him to his son-in-law, Mr. Turner, as a maid for his wife. We were married in the spacious hall of the Bishop's residence by him on the 8th day of November, 1862. The Bishop's wife and daughters had provided for the occas-

ion a splendid repast of good things to eat. The table, richly spread, with turkey, ham, cake, and many other things, extended nearly the whole length of the spacious dining hall. "The house girls" and "the house boys" and the most prominent persons of color were invited to the wedding of the colored "swells." The ladies composing the Bishop's family, dressed my bride in the gayest and most artistic style, with red flowers and scarlet sashes predominating in the brilliant trail. As the gorgeous flashes of waving scarlet and white softly moved across the spacious hall and stood in the glare of the light, I thought I saw in my Harriett an angel in the dwarfed splendors of heaven as if ornamented with gems set upon a background of gold. In the vision of life that then threw its brightness upon me, I saw nothing but the roseate splendors of its triumphs and its glory. But since then I have seen something of its opposite phases, and know much of its trials, reverses and disappointments. From the union thus formed fourteen children were born, but only nine of them lived. One of them, the first child, a daughter, died in her seventeenth year. The others died at birth. I have at present, eight living children, four of whom are boys.

After I was licensed to preach in 1868, I belonged to the M. E. Church, South, as all colored people did who were Methodists in the slave States. In 1868 and 1869, I was on the Hancock circuit which covered the entire county. Rev. E. B. Oliver and myself were the pastors. I was senior and he junior. There were seven churches on the circuit, and we followed each other in rotation. Brother Oliver was a great preacher, also great in prayer and song. He was the popular man among the people and their ideal man and pastor. He had a clear, loud, high, ringing voice, with a rare depth of pathos and sweetness. He could make his voice thunder, thud, or scream, as the occasion required, and a few blasts, as it were, of his silver clarion, in that "age of stone" was

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considered a wonderful sermon. One of the most difficult things with which I had to contend, was to get from under the withering blight of his trumpet voice. The man that had the loudest voice and the most dramatic emotions in pulpit or on platform, was necessarily, irrevocably, infallibly, and eternally in the estimation of the people, the great preacher, the flying angel of the everlasting gospel. But as I was farming, and not depending on the people for a living, I continued common sense preaching, which was considered by the undiscerning multitudes as very dry. My hearers would often take a nap while I was trying to do my little talking. My voice was very poor, weak, and defective, which greatly militated against me as a preacher. As a preacher's ability, in those days, was measured by his voice, a poor fellow like I was in a bad fix. It was noise that moved the multitudes, held the public ear, and like magic, swayed the public heart. For a long time I did not know where the trouble lay. I could not move the multitudes to tears like the junior preacher, although it was understood by the people that I was "the deeper reasoner," as they used to say, but was "no preacher." However, I never was discouraged by the adverse verdict of the people, because I had higher aims, ambition, and an undagging industry which never faltered, but pressed every moment and opportunity into service that could be spared from the farm and circuit work. But it was voice that I needed more than learning or gospel. What shall I do to make it thunder, scream, screech, howl, or roar as did the junior preacher. I had heard of a great Grecian orator, who, to improve his voice, put pebbles of stone in his mouth, and spoke against the loud roar of waves on the sea shore. As I lived in the hill country away from the great waters and as "there was no more sea" for me, I often spent an hour in the woods, and from a pine stump, serving as a temporary pulpit, I would take the text to be used on the next Sabbath, and from

it preach in a loud voice. I went through with all the gestures and attitudes with some respect for silent nature as was to be given to the listening congregation. A stump was my pulpit, the trees, grape-vines, and the smaller daughters of the woods were my congregation, and the open heavens were the high dome under which I proclaimed the truth as best I could to a silent and emotionless multitude. This practice helped me wonderfully, and soon I began to thunder and rattle like the other big preachers.

No salary was fixed for the circuit preachers. Each man made his living in the sweat of his face, and preached on Sunday as best he could. But at the end of the second year it was proposed by some of the members of one of the churches to give the preachers a collection, and they willingly and generously gave us both the magnanimous sum of four dollars for the two years' services. We both were present, and a wide-awake and generous brother paid us the money, and with a triumphant air on his beaming countenance, said to us, in the tone of self-congratulation, "We are glad you don't preach for money, but for souls." Thus ended my first two years as circuit preacher. The memory of those two years is still fresh and green with its romance and "spiritual revelries." The following year (January 4th, 1869) Bishop Pierce called all the preachers of color, belonging to the M. E. Church, South, in the State of Georgia to meet in Trinity church at Augusta. On the day appointed, about sixty of the preachers assembled in Conference, and here, under the presidency of Bishop Geo. F. Pierce, the first Annual Conference was organized. Up to this time, all the colored preachers were merely *local*, and but few had received ordination. The material was very raw and untrained, and the men presented that uncomely appearance that belonged to the earlier days of freedom. A few had on long coats, and "plug" or "stove-pipe" hats, and all who could, wore

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

long hair so as to look venerable, which was thought to be very becoming to ministerial dignity. To be in style and maintain the exalted dignity of the venerable parsons, I was adorned with a bushy head of red hair, parted in the middle, and covered by a "stove-pipe hat" of indefinite length. Like many other young circuit riders, fresh from the "bushes," I began to suspect that I was a very wonderful personality, based especially upon the length of my hat, and the enormous amount of "the insufferable wool" upon which it was pillared. I made the same mistakes that I have often observed in young preachers in later years. I was too big a fool to know that I was a fool. But the wear and tear of years will correct such errors, and force our erratic manhood into line. Of this conference of "raw recruits" I became a member. As there had to be a starting point, all the preachers who attended became at once full members of the Conference, and deacon's orders were given to most of them. At this Conference I was ordained a deacon by Bishop Pierce and sent to Savannah, Ga. After I had received the appointment I returned home, sold out my farming interests, abandoned the plow, gathered my family, and went to Savannah to take charge of the colored church known as "Andrew Chapel." But this church was seized upon by the A. M. E. Connection, and was then in litigation. As there was no way for me to get or use the church, the white people of Trinity church in Savannah gave me their library to preach in, which was located up stairs in the rear of the church. Lest we should come in conflict with the white congregation because of our noise, we held our meetings only in the afternoons on the Sabbath. Here I preached and labored as pastor with a membership of about fifteen for six months. As the church was in litigation and could not be obtained until the decision of the court, I returned to my home near Sparta, Ga. Up to this time I was very deficient in that training that was almost

absolutely essential for successful work in the ministry. I had a wife and three children to care for, and a very little of this world's goods. It is true, it required but little for their support, but then that little was essential. Happily for us, we lived two miles in the country from the town, where we had no rent to pay, no wood to buy, and were surrounded by plenty of vegetables and fruits. My wife milked a cow that was given to us by the owner of the place. We had chickens and eggs besides. I had learned to read to some extent in the days of slavery, and I thought that I knew it all, but going to Savannah was an "eye-opener," and I now had begun to see myself in the true light. Savannah was too big for me, and I was too little for Savannah. I learned by the dint of adverse conditions that the world had more in it than I had hitherto calculated.

As stated before, in 1857, when my second owner, Mr. T. L. Wynn, died, I became the property of Col. R. M. Johnston. In the early winter of that year he went to Athens, Ga., and became a professor in the State College. As an important part of his effects, I was carried along with him and his family as carriage driver, house servant, and gardener. I was then fifteen years of age. As soon as I arrived in Athens, I felt an insatiable craving for some knowledge of books, and especially I was anxious to learn to read the Bible. What must I do? I was a slave and could not attend school, and it was considered unwise, if not dangerous for slaves to read and write. But my owners, although strict, were very kind, especially my master. So I determined to learn to read at all hazards, and take whatever risks there might be connected with it. There was a junk house in the city where rags were sold. I gathered and saved all the rags that I could, and sold them that I might get some money with which to buy books. After weeks of toil and intense vigilance in gathering and watching for rags that belonged to the first man that laid hands upon them, I

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had accumulated about thirty pounds. These I stuffed into the legs and seat of a pair of old white pantaloons, the cast-off garment of a large and long-legged man. At nights after tea, I was allowed to "go down town" for recreation. I hired a boy to help me carry the rags to sell them to the rag merchant. The boy put one leg of the pants on one shoulder, and the other leg on the other, and we both marched to town with bright dreams of wealth. Reaching the store, I lingered in the darkness in front of the door, and when the boy walked in with something that had the appearance of a fat man on his shoulders, the man said in a loud voice as if astonished at the strange sight, "What in the h— is that you have on your back?" "Some rags," replied the boy. "Well, lay them on the scales," said the merchant. So we did, the rags were sold and the money was mine. With this money I bought books. I purchased at one time, two "Webster blue back spellers," a common school dictionary, Milton's "Paradise Lost," and a Bible. These then constituted my full stock of literary possessions, a library more precious than gold to me. There were several colored people in town that could "spell to baker," in the old speller, while others could go to "the a, b, ab's" or to "the b, a, ba's." The white children and an old colored man taught me the alphabet, after which I fought my way unaided through the depths of my ponderous library. Day by day I took a leaf from one of the spelling books, and so folded it that one or two of the lessons were on the outside as if printed on a card. This I put in the pocket of my vest or coat, and when I was sitting on the carriage, walking the yard or streets, or using hoe or spade, or in the dining room, I would take out my spelling leaf, catch a word and commit it to memory. When one side of the spelling leaf was finished by this process, I would refold it again with a new lesson on the outside. When night came, I went to my little room, and with chips of fat pine, and pine roots

that were grubbed up from the woods near by, I would kindle a little blaze in the fire-place and turn my head toward it while lying flat on my back so as to get the most of the light on the leaves of the book. Thus lying on the floor with pine knots at hand and my blankets around me, I reviewed the lessons of the day from the unmaimed book. By these means I learned to read and write a little in six months. Besides, I would catch words from the white people and retain them in memory until I could get to my dictionary. Then I would spell and define the words, until they became perfectly impressed upon my memory.

In 1858, in Athens, Ga., I was converted, and became a member of the Methodist church. At that time Rev. W. A. Parks was sent as pastor to the colored church, while his uncle, Rev. H. H. Parks, was pastor of the white people's church. During April and May of this year, Rev. H. M. Turner, (now Bishop) came to Athens and preached every night to appreciative congregations, and under his powerful sermons I experienced a change of heart, and became a zealous member of the church. I was taken into the church by Rev. Mr. Parks, and baptized and fellowshipped by his uncle, the Rev. H. H. Parks.

In 1861 when the war began, my owners moved back to Hancock county where I remained until freedom came to the slaves. After returning from Savannah in 1869, I began afresh my studies. That I might be retired and placed in the best condition to prosecute my studies, I purchased a number of school books and theological works, and sought a convenient place in the woods near by where I was then living. Every day when the weather would permit I resorted to this place for study, contemplation, and prayer. By the bank of a little rippling brook that came murmuring down the rocky hillsides, I found an over-hanging boulder that ran up perpendicularly, mildly facing the east. A cluster of maple

trees, interspersed with sweet gum, that constantly dropped their fragrance along the brook beneath, I selected as a silent boudoir. Wild grape-vines interlaced with yellow jessamines, wrapt around the slim trunks of the towering wood, and threw a crown of green and tangled meshes of vines and flowers on the waving limbs above. The murmuring brook that rolled below whispered to me the presence of God, the wonders of his providence, and the marvels of his hand. Here, in the deep solitudes of silent nature, retired and alone, I spent the greater part of two years. Here I studied reading, writing, geography, grammar, arithmetic, astronomy, history, and theology. I read Milton, Dick's Works, Watson, Wesley, Stevens' History of Methodism, and a number of other books. Among them were "Barnes' Notes," and "Newton on the Prophecies." I gave close attention to the English language, as I would need that more than anything else. When I came to a word that I did not understand I would turn to the dictionary, spell it and define it, and with a cedar pencil I would write down every word thus acquired. On the next day I first had a thorough review of all the words and all that I had read and studied the day before. I cared nothing for gold and silver, nor the presence and company of mankind, nor anything that would divert the mind from its deep thoughts of God or intense application. At the end of about twenty months I was lost and bewildered in the deep things of God. However, I rose from my hermit home with spiritual powers and convictions that have been a wonderful help to me through all these years of struggle and toil. I became so intensely interested and profoundly engaged that sometimes I seemed to have been out of the body and in another sphere where God and angels stood nearer to men. There are no months and days in my life more precious to me than those days of mental struggle and silent contemplation. Then it was that my intellect was broadened and deepened, my religious proclivities intensified, and my character fixed.

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In the fall of 1869 the colored conference of Georgia met in Macon, having Bishop Pierce for its President. Here I was ordained Elder and elected delegate to the organizing General Conference, which met in Jackson, Tenn., the 15th day of December, when the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America became a separate organization. I was present as a delegate during the session of the conference and voted upon all the measures that were put forth for the organization of the C. M. E. Church into a separate body. I was also the strongest advocate for the election of W. H. Miles, of Kentucky, to the bishopric. I first entered his name as a suitable person for the bishopric, and on the first ballot he was triumphantly elected.

In January, 1871, the Conference convened in Augusta, Ga. Three Bishops were present, Miles, Vanderhost and Pierce. Bishops Miles and Vanderhost were the presidents, and presided on alternate days. Bishop Pierce was the distinguished and honored guest. When the appointments were read out I was appointed to Trinity church, then the leading church in the conference, and perhaps in the connection. Here I was pastor two years and four months. In the fall of 1872 the conference was held in Columbus, Ga. Bishop Miles presided, and I was elected delegate to the called session of the General Conference which met in Augusta, Ga., in March, 1873. I received every vote in the Annual Conference cast for delegates to the called session of the General Conference. When the General Conference assembled in extraordinary session in Augusta, in 1873, I was then pastor of Trinity church in which the conference was held. The business for which the General Conference was convoked in extraordinary session, was the election and consecration of three Bishops. Bishop Vanderhost was dead, and the whole presiding fell upon Bishop Miles. Bishop Pierce was present by special invitation.

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Three men were elected Bishops, namely: J. A. Beebe, L. H. Holsey, and Isaac Lane. I was elected on the first ballot with Bishop Beebe, and I think I received every vote cast but two. I assisted Bishop Miles in preparing the Bishop's message for the conference, and took a leading part in all its work. Bishop Pierce preached the ordination sermon on the Sabbath, and at that time I was ordained Bishop by Bishop Miles, assisted by Bishop Pierce. Here also, Bishops Beebe and Lane were ordained. The respective fields of labor for the new Bishops were laid off, and I was sent to Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, and Tennessee. The Bishop's salary was fixed at eight hundred dollars, his traveling expenses to be paid by the work he served. The work was poorly organized, and, indeed, was scarcely organized at all. I had with myself, seven in family. It was hard to get bread to live on and pay traveling expenses. My wife and children lived mainly on peas, bacon, and corn bread, having biscuits for Sunday morning breakfast. None of them had any shoes but went barefooted, and nearly naked, and lived in only a two-room house in Augusta. The first ten years was a struggle, a terrible struggle to keep our heads above the wave. I have been so pushed for fuel on a cold night that I would take the coal ashes and wash them in water and drain out the burnt bits of coal in order to make a fire. In these years of suffering and almost starvation, my vegetable garden was the main and real dependence for a living. My good wife being strong and muscular stood by our garden, and often at night when the moon was shining, she and I would put the little ones to bed, and work until twelve o'clock. She would often cut short the rations for the family that I might have money to reach the appointments and build up the connection. No one knows the anxiety, the sorrow, and the depth of suffering through which I have had to pass for the church of my choice. The annals of God alone can tell. I cannot. But on I went, struggling

up the hill of difficulty, often staggering and trembling beneath the heavy load. At an earlier period of my history (1869-70) my small amount of money once gave out and I taught a little school that kept the wolf of hunger from the door. This process of training to which I subjected myself, in its results, is, of course, infinitely better than ignorance; but it is far inferior to a regular course in the schools. I have found that it is patchwork, a kind of crazy quilt education; and yet this form of training has its blessings and advantages. It teaches a man to rely upon his own efforts, and by experience he is convinced that nothing is impossible for him to accomplish by industry and faithful application. Since I have been a Bishop I have been in the regular work. I have tried to do the work assigned to my hands with an eye single to the glory of God, the good of the race, and the salvation of men. I have traveled and preached all over the Southern States many times, and have been intensely interested in the establishment of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Not because I thought it to be the best church in itself, not because I thought it purer and better than other such organizations, but because I thought it to be the most fitted religious power to meet the peculiar conditions that exist in the Southern States. Harmony between the two races is what is needed. There can be no great progress in the betterment of the people of color without peace and harmony. The pulpit has much to do with human sentiment, and consequently with the actions of men. A semi-civilized people are necessarily greatly controlled by their religious feelings and sentiments. Often they are very religious, and at the same time very slow to comprehend their true status and the best modes of procedure in the chief things that make for their peace and prosperity. Many conditions and facts come in to make the Negro race unique in this country. The diversity of manhood brought about by the diversity of character presents to

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the calm judgment of the philanthropist intricate questions that involve the life and safety of the race. Moral purity and Christian excellence being equal, the best church for them is that religious organization that can, without compromising its great fundamental principles, adapt itself to present conditions. From the time of the emancipation of the slaves by the fortunes of war, I have not seen any reason why the Southern people should not be the real and true friends of the Negro race. The very religion that they taught, and practiced, and preached to the Negroes, directed them to be the friends of the ex-slaves. Consequently, I can see no reasons why they should not teach Negroes in the school room. I saw from the first no reasons for any feelings of hate and revenge, either on the part of the one or the other. Accordingly, at the Conference held in Macon in 1869, I wrote and offered a paper on Education, in which I advocated the establishment of a church school by the M. E. Church, South, for the training of Negro preachers, said school to be taught by some of the good white people of that church. I knew that colored ministers of the gospel were far behind in those accomplishments that best fitted them for that important work, and that up to that date there had been but few opportunities presented to them for improvement. It was also clear to my mind that the white ministry was the only standard of excellence by which the colored ministers could be inspired to reach a higher plane of fitness. True, the Bible lay open before them, but in the conduct of the white ministers, the teachings of the Bible were displayed in visible, tangible form, and in its best practical phases. I thought then, and still think, the nearer the colored and white preachers are to each other in the work of the ministry, the better it would be for us all. This view of things caused me to be a perpetual and persistent advocate of the establishment of a school for the training of our preachers under the care and complete control of

the M. E. Church, South, with teachers from the same source. "The Paine Institute" is the outcome of this sentiment. To enforce this idea I wrote a series of letters upon the subject in 1870 just prior to the organization of the Colored M. E. Church in America. The letters were published in the *Christian Index* while Dr. Watson was editing and publishing that paper for the colored people. At that time, and for some years after, many people, white and colored, thought that I was a "crank," and that it was the one thing impractical if not impossible.

In 1882 I was sent as Fraternal Messenger to the General Conference of the M. E. Church, South, which assembled in Nashville, Tenn. I was especially instructed, first, to bear to them the friendly greetings of the colored church, and then to ask them to establish a school for us wherein our ministry might be properly trained and fitted for evangelistic work among their own people. When the General Conference of that church was held in Atlanta four years before, I addressed a rather lengthy communication to them upon the same subject. Some things I then said were thought to be a little reproachful, or reflective on them. Their noble endeavors to preach the gospel in heathen countries, while they neglected the heathen at home, appeared to me to be inconsistent with the teachings of Christ and the Apostles. I meant not that the evangelical work in foreign countries should be neglected, or left to perish, but that the needy people at home should have some attention given to them as was done in the days of slavery. It was true, there were many barriers in the way, but no more in this country than in foreign lands. It ought to be said, however, that after emancipation the Negroes held themselves aloof from the Southern people to such extent that no proposition made by the latter could reach the former. Consequently, the margin for evangelistic labors among Negroes by Southern white people was narrow. When

The Paine Institute became a reality, but few of the colored people approved of it, and the men of my own "faith and order" were more against it than those on the outside. My own preachers fought it bitterly as an untimely and, unwise measure. They fought it because they thought that other Negro organizations would reproach us for being under the Southern sentiment and bowing to the verdict of pure prejudice upon the race question. Already all the colored churches had branded us as "Democrats," "bootlicks," and "white folks' niggers," whose only aim was ultimately to remand the freedmen back to abject bondage. This was, as subsequent events have proven, a distorted view of a great movement. But prior to the organization of the school in 1883, I traveled over the States, agitated the question, and spoke in its behalf in public and private. In the early fall of 1882 I held the Virginia Conference in Front Royal, and there I made a speech on the question, and laid the first dollar on the table that was ever given to it. Rev. W. T. Thomas followed with a like amount.

When I made my speech before the General Conference of the M. E. Church, South, in Nashville, in 1882, in behalf of the school, it was well taken and highly appreciated by the large and intelligent audience. The venerable John B. McFerrin put his arms around my shoulders and congratulated me for its timeliness. So did a large number of others. While I knew that all was agreeable and pleasant, yet I had a sense of fear and a thrill of doubt, lest I should make a failure, and the chief end for which I came should be defeated, and the whole project lost. But the golden eagle of success perched upon my staff, and I felt as a plumed knight beneath its wings. I had but one object in view and that was to help my fellowman. As this General Conference authorized the establishment of the school, and appointed a committee to put the thing in motion, Bishop Pierce being the chairman, called that committee to meet in At-

lanta. In the summer of 1882 it convened in the First Church. Bishop Pierce and Dr. Haygood, and all the Bishops of the colored church were present. I wrote to our Bishops and urged them to be present, and all agreed to come but Bishop Miles. But I wrote him again to be present, lest he should hinder the initiatory of a great work, and to my surprise he came. The whole matter was discussed *pro* and *con*. It was agreed to locate the school at Augusta, Ga., and ask the church for two hundred thousand dollars for facilities and endowment. Early in January, 1883, Rev. Morgan Calloway, D.D., then the vice-president of Emory College, and Rev. Geo. W. Walker, of the South Carolina Conference of the M. E. Church, South, came to Augusta and organized the school. For this purpose rooms were rented in the heart of the city, and I gathered up the students by personal solicitation and public appeals until the number reached about thirty. Still it was a dark day for the school. Popular sentiment, among white and black, was widespread and bitter against it. But my friends were numerous, and Dr. Calloway used to say that I had more friends than any man he ever saw. I paid the first hundred dollars that were ever given for that purpose, a few days before the organization of the school, and since that time I have given myself, and collected from others almost continuously whatever I could for it.

In 1886, at the request of Rev. W. C. Dunlap, who was then its commissioner, I wrote a strong paper upon The Paine Institute, and sent it to him, and he sent it to the Nashville "Christian Advocate" to be published. But as it was so long before it appeared in the "Advocate," I concluded that it had found its way to the waste basket. Finally it appeared and I afterward learned from Mr. Dunlap the reason for this delay. He told me that the editor hesitated in publishing it because he believed it to be somebody else's production, and, consequently, "bogus." It was thought that the paper was an abler

one than I could produce. It was published on the first page of the great church paper, a place where only the best documents appear.

In 1890 I was impressed that enlarged facilities were almost essential to the successful work of the school, and I started out of my own accord, with almost infinite misgivings, to make speeches before as many Conferences of the M. E. Church, South, as I might be permitted to reach. This I did with good results, as to the aid given the school. Although I was self-appointed, these conferences gave me the warmest reception and responded liberally to the cause. This conference year (1897-'98) I am out on the same work. The trustees of the school and the Bishops of the Colored Church, and others, thought it wise, and so steadily urged me to take the field again in behalf of the school. This I have done, and have spoken before fourteen of the Conferences. In 1886 the General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, met in Augusta, Ga., and at that session I wrote our "Financial Plan" by which Paine Institute and the other schools have received a considerable amount of money for their running expenses. I wrote this financial plan with special reference to the support of the schools of the church, which at that time were only two—"The Paine" and "The Lane." Perhaps there is no single act of legislation connected with the history of the church so significant and far-reaching in its effects as our "Financial Plan." Prior to its adoption in 1886 there was no way of a practical nature for the collection and disbursement of the general funds or general revenue of the church; but since the "Financial Plan" has been operated, the whole connection and the schools have felt the advantages, and owe their life, in a large measure, to its operation.

For twenty years I was the Secretary of the College of Bishops, and kept the minutes of our meetings from year to year at my own expense. Also, for the same length

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of time, I was the statistician and corresponding secretary of the connection, and replied to all communications of a public nature. I have written every Message for the Bishops except the one written by Bishop Miles, in 1873, and I assisted him in that one. Only two of these Messages have ever been changed in a single word or sentence by the Bishops after I had written them, and consequently nearly all of the acts and legislation of our general conferences have been governed by them. I have read and passed upon every book in manuscript that has been published in our church from its organization until the present time, and have written their introductions. By authority of the General Conference, I have written and compiled the only hymn book and the only Manual of Discipline that we have ever had, without any aid from the church whatever.

In 1881 four delegates were selected by the Bishops to represent the church in the Ecumenical Conference that was held in London, England, and no one went but myself. As yet I am the only C. M. E. representative that has ever gone to a foreign port on an official errand. I read a paper before that splendid and august body according to the program. While in London I preached in City Road Chapel, the distinguished mother of Methodism, from the same little box pulpit from which John Wesley preached the gospel of free grace. I did what I could upon the same great subject. During my stay in this the largest city of the world, I preached many times, perhaps with more force than I have before or since. On this trip to the first Ecumenical Conference of Methodism, I visited Paris and spent a week in "sight-seeing," weighing and measuring the world's greatest civilization, which no man can know until he comes in contact with it. I was delegate to the Centennial Conference of American Methodism that was held in Baltimore in 1884, and wrote a paper that was read in that conference. I was not present on account of ill health, but the paper

was read by Rev. F. M. Hamilton, M. D. I was also a member of the last Ecumenical Conference that was held in Washington, D. C.

From 1870 until the present time (1898) I have written a great many papers and public communications on the history and polity of the church, a large number of which have been published in the Christian Index, the official organ of the church. I have given the reading public the greatest part of what permanent literature the church, up to the present time, has been able to produce. A great deal of what I have written in the last twenty-eight years never has been and never will be published. Much of it has already been suppressed, the other in all probability will be. I have often written sermons and afterwards destroyed them. This I have regretted, but they are gone beyond recalling.

As orator or writer, philosopher or preacher, I leave the estimate of myself to the candid judgment of those who have known me. As a citizen I have tried to do the right, no matter how far I have come short of it.

My history is the history of the church of which I am a member. Its history cannot be written, nor its records compiled without me as one of the chief actors in its drama, and one who has deeply impressed himself upon its character and productions.

At present, I am the editor-in-chief of "The Gospel Trumpet," associated with the Rev. R. A. Carter, A.M., who is the managing editor. I was elected to the office of Bishop when I was in my thirtieth year of age, and have held the position for twenty-five years. When I was elected it was said by some prominent man that I was the youngest man ever elected Bishop in any age or church.

I have not sought to get rich, nor make money, and have in no way made my office, position, nor the church an instrument of power or worldly gain. All that I have received above a bare living, I have made it a habit to re-

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turn to the church, and to help on to a better state suffering humanity. At this time I have no "cottage in the wilderness" that I can call my home, and I have been in debt ever since I have been a Bishop. From youth to the present, life has been an unremitting struggle and a perpetual series of trials and conflicts. I have helped every man, woman and child that I could, and have tried to bear the burdens of others as the Scriptures direct.

L. H. HOLSEY.

Atlanta, Ga., February 23, 1898.

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