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# SOLDIER and SERVANT

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GEORGE WHITE

By

EDGAR LEGARE PENNINGTON, S. T. D.

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## UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

LIEUT. COMDR. E. L. PENNINGTON, CHAPLAINS' CORPS, U.S.N.R.

The Reverend Edgar Legare Pennington, S. T. D. [Doctor of Sacred Theology], formerly Rector of The Church of the Holy Cross, Miami, Florida, which was founded by Fr. J. O. S. Huntington and Brother Bernard, in 1897, is, it is believed, with the Allied Forces somewhere below the Southern Cross. He has written:

"I wish I could tell you something about myself, my work and my locale; but all I can say is that I am very, very far away from you geographically; that I am getting accustomed to a new set of stars; that I am getting used to reverse seasons — having preached two harvest day sermons in local churches yesterday [the letter was dated April 5, 1943]; that I am in a garden spot of the world, among most charming and lovable people; and that I am somewhere in which splendid missionary exertions have ripened into a wondrous culture, a degree of refinement which puts us often to shame, and a high standard of Church and morality.

"I have not had much time for study, and, of course, did not carry my notes on American Church history with me: but I am going to familiarize myself with local Church history."

In another letter he writes:

"I have most delightful and refreshing experiences with these clergymen here. They are wonderful, and they are the soul of hospitality. Several of them are Oxford and Cambridge men, and they excel in solid things."

Previously to his transfer to his present (to us unknown) field, Dr. Pennington had been stationed, as Chaplain, at the U. S. Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida.

For a number of years past Dr. Pennington has been contributing valuable historical numbers to the Church Missions Publishing Company, as FROM CANTERBURY TO CONNECTICUT, a complete list of all the Bishops through whom the Apostolic Succession brought by St. Augustine to Canterbury in 597 passed to Bishop Seabury.

The present number is a good example of his thoroughness in bringing to light the worthies of the past.

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# GEORGE WHITE

TEACHER, HISTORIAN AND PRIEST

By

EDGAR LEGARE PENNINGTON, S. T. D.

The subject of this study was born in Charleston, South Carolina, March 12, 1802, "of poor, but industrious parents."<sup>1</sup> They were honest, straightforward, and "truly pious people"; and their son "early showed that piety which marked his whole life." When he expressed a desire to enter the ministry, his parents, who were Methodists, offered no objection; and at the age of eighteen, he was licensed to preach the gospel.<sup>2</sup> He soon became known as the "beardless preacher."<sup>3</sup> His early education seems to have been acquired principally through his own efforts.<sup>4</sup>

In 1823, young Mr. White moved to Savannah, Georgia, where he continued to reside for the next quarter of a century. It was there that he did a most remarkable work as a teacher of the youth and exerted an influence which long lingered as a tradition; in Savannah also he began the historical, geographical, and statistical investigations for which he is famous. White's interest in the Episcopal Church probably antedated his removal to Georgia, and may have been aroused by the saintly Bishop of South Carolina, Theodore Dehon (1776-1817). One of his sons was named in honour of that bishop.<sup>5</sup>

As a teacher, Mr. White was known as a man of learning and a rigid but kindly disciplinarian. In 1824 — his second year in Savannah — he offered "a complete academy course" at his school, with no advance of terms.<sup>6</sup> His school was then located in the lower rooms of the Solomon Lodge Hall. In 1826, he was elected principal of the Chatham Academy.<sup>7</sup> On many occasions, he refused to teach girls, lest he be compelled to adopt a milder discipline and relax his requirements of scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Notwith-

<sup>1</sup>E. M. Coulter: *article* George White, in Dictionary of American Biography, XX. 99.

<sup>2</sup>Tallulah G. White: *article* George White, in Northen, W. J.: Men of Mark in Georgia, II. 416.

<sup>3</sup>E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup>H. S. Bowden: Two Hundred Years of Education . . . Savannah, Chatham county, Georgia, p. 156.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 159; E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

standing his firmness, he won "the affection of his pupils and the permanent esteem of their parents and guardians."<sup>9</sup> He stressed reading and elocution. He did not permit his assistants to chastise the pupils; and later in life, he is said to have doubted the wisdom of corporal punishment.<sup>10</sup>

On the 3rd of May, 1827, the Reverend Lot Jones was chosen successor of Mr. White as superintendent of the public-controlled Chatham Academy.<sup>11</sup> Mr. White returned to his own academy, which he conducted under different names for several years.

The following announcement appeared in the *Daily Georgian*, October 29, 1830:

"Chatham Academy, George White, Principal. The subscriber announces to the public that recent arrangements enable him to say confidently that the pupils committed to his care will be properly instructed in all the branches of a complete Classical and English Education. In addition to his present number of assistants, he has employed Mr. W. H. Hunt, a graduate of Franklin College and one of the four to whom first honor was awarded at its last commencement.

"The course of instruction will embrace the Latin, Greek and French languages, the Mathematics in all its branches, Natural Philosophy and Chemistry, English Grammar, etc. If sufficient encouragement is offered, an apparatus for practical illustration will be purchased. A well selected library has been obtained to which pupils have access without any extra charge. To facilitate the development of the intellectual and improve the reasoning powers of the students, a society has been organized in which are discussed such questions as are most likely to effect the important objects.

"Terms of tuition: Latin and Greek languages, \$12; Mathematics, \$10; Arithmetic, Grammar, etc., \$10; French, \$10. The amount of the first quarter's tuition payable in advance. George White.

"N. B. Mr. White would receive four or five boys in his family who will be furnished board and educated at the rate of \$150 per annum."<sup>12</sup>

Commenting on the above, Professor Haygood Samuel Bowden says:

<sup>9</sup>*Georgian*, May 12, 1843, quoted by E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, p. 417.

<sup>11</sup>H. S. Bowden: *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>12</sup>Quoted by H. S. Bowden: *op. cit.*, p. 165.



“It can be readily seen that Mr. White was a schoolmaster who knew what he wanted to do. That he was not to be handicapped by a Board of Trustees. That he proposed to be boss of his own school. For the next two years Chatham Academy made history for Savannah.”<sup>13</sup>

At a celebration of the opening of the Savannah and Ogeechee River canal, pupils from Mr. White’s room of the Academy, accompanied by their preceptor, entertained with recitations and selected poetry the large number of stockholders on the barge that went the entire length of the canal and returned by moonlight.<sup>14</sup>

The *Georgian*, May 16, 1831, described one of the public parades of Mr. White’s pupils:

“The annual examination of the pupils of Chatham Academy took place last week, and its accompanying exhibition on Friday evening, on which day the scholars marched in procession, accompanied by a band of music to the Exchange, on reaching which the boys formed a line and gallantly saluted their female companions in the pursuit of knowledge, as they passed down the front. The boys wore uniform dress of grey jackets, white pantaloons and leathern caps, and the girls, who were tastefully dressed, looked remarkably well.”<sup>15</sup>

The report of the Board of Examiners of Chatham Academy, as printed in the *Georgian* of May 24, 1832, shows the regard in which Mr. White was held:

“The Board of Examiners who attended the examinations at the Academy, deem it an act of justice to the Principal, the Rev. Mr. White, to express their opinion of the merits of the system of instruction pursued in his school, and the scholars instructed. They speak with all sincerity when they declare that the examination just gone through has given them the unqualified satisfaction. There have been exhibited by the scholars generally, a promptness and correctness of answering questions, concise in explanation of the rationale of their answers, such as to leave on the mind of the Board the impression that the questions were answered because they were understood and not by rote. When they thus speak favorably of the attainment of the

<sup>13</sup>H. W. Bowden: *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted by H. S. Bowden: *op. cit.*, pp. 167-8.

scholars, the conclusion is unavoidable that the system which produces such results must be a good one, and when they refer to the most excellent manner in which classes in Natural Philosophy acquitted themselves, they do not hesitate to assert that the superior philosophical apparatus which Mr. White, with a most praiseworthy liberality, has supplied his school, has been mainly instrumental in producing the happy result. By means of the apparatus, the fundamental truths of Natural Philosophy, which serve as a basis for the whole superstructure, are brought home to the pupil, with force and directness which renders them almost indelible. If a boy be told that in mechanics, a weight of two pounds can be made to balance one of eight pounds, he may believe it or he may not, and the chances are great that he will forget it as soon as told. But if a weight of two ounces be shown to him actually balancing one of eight ounces by means of pulleys, an indelible conviction is produced on his mind of the truth of the assertion.”<sup>16</sup>

It is seen that Mr. White used laboratory methods in presenting scientific truths. Just why he severed his relations with the Chatham Academy is not known. Bowden surmises that “evidently Mr. White was a schoolmaster and not a school administrator; he was a teacher and not a politician.” At any rate, on September 18, 1832, the secretary of Chatham Academy announced that the institution would open on November 5 with new superintendents. Mr. White re-established his own academy, and for fifteen years it was recognized as one of the best in the South.<sup>17</sup> The population of Savannah was then 14,130. There were 7,303 white people in the city limits, and some four hundred children in the schools.<sup>18</sup>

In 1835, Mr. White enlarged his academy, and called it the Savannah Academy. Under his guidance, the school took first rank as one of the best in the South. Alfred Rogers, a French schoolmaster, was employed to conduct the department of French, Spanish, and Drawing for the young ladies.<sup>19</sup>

The report of the Board of Examiners of the Savannah Academy, May 1, 1837, commended Mr. White and his work:

“This examination in most cases was rigid, and in all was creditable to instructor and pupils. While we state our entire

<sup>16</sup>Quoted by H. S. Bowden: *op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>17</sup>H. W. Bowden: *op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 190.

satisfaction at the result, we doubt not that we express the feelings of all who were spectators. Mr. White has been laboring for fifteen years in this community as an instructor of youth and while we tender to him our congratulations for his success with which he prosecuted his labors and the present prosperous state of his institution, we must cheerfully unite in urging its claim upon the continued patronage of its friends, and the confidence of the public. . . . We learn that there are from 140 to 150 pupils of both sexes.”<sup>20</sup>

Mr. White was active in civic affairs and by no means confined his energies to teaching. When the Marquis de Lafayette visited America in 1824-1825, he was tendered a grand reception in Savannah; and on that occasion George White officiated as chaplain. The Georgia Historical Society was organized on Tuesday, June 4, 1839. It was incorporated and received the approval of Governor Charles J. McDonald, December 19 of that year. Its object was “collecting, preserving, and diffusing information relating to the history of the State of Georgia in particular and of American history generally.” Mr. White was one of the charter-members. Another charter-member — the first recording secretary and historiographer of the Society — was William Bacon Stevens, M. D. (1815-1887), who later became Bishop of Pennsylvania.

Having grown to prefer the Episcopal Church, Mr. White gave up his association with the Methodists. On December 13, 1833, he was ordained Deacon by Bishop Nathaniel Bowen of South Carolina (1779-1839). On August 31, 1836, he was ordained Priest at St. Michael’s Church, Charleston, by the same Bishop.<sup>21</sup> During the last five years of his residence in Savannah, he engaged in mission work along the Georgia coasts, visiting the islands; he also preached to seamen.<sup>22</sup>

More and more his interest induced him to the production of his first authoritative work on his adopted state. “Through long and tedious investigations in Georgia and as far north as New York City,” he was able to bring out his *Statistics of Georgia*, “a work of great merit.”<sup>23</sup> The complete title-page is as follows:

“Statistics of the state of Georgia: including an account of its Natural, Civil, and Ecclesiastical History; together

<sup>20</sup>*Georgian*, quoted by H. S. Bowden: *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>21</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, p. 417.

<sup>22</sup>E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

with a particular description of each county, notices of the manners and customs of its aboriginal tribes, and a correct map of the state. By George White. Savannah: W. Thorne Williams. 1849.”

[ pp. 624, 77; folding map; 22½ cm. ]

“Catalogue of the fauna and flora of the state of Georgia. Prepared for this work by eminent naturalists. Comprising mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, crustacea, shells, and plants.”

[ pp. 77 at the end ]

At that time, the state of Georgia contained ninety-three counties. A separate division was given to each county; and Mr. White gave the boundaries and the extent of the counties, the rivers and creeks, the post-offices, the population, the amount of taxes paid, the allotted representation; he described all towns, mineral springs, mountains and other physical features, ores, natural resources; he dealt with climatic conditions, rainfall, and the nature of the soil; he listed the roads and bridges; he discussed the religious sects, introducing the names and locations of the first churches in each county and the early members, and telling when the churches were founded and built; he described education, industry, manufacturing, and mills; he named the early settlers; he gave examples of longevity; and he always accounted for the origin of the name of the county and told something of its history.

There were introductory chapters, such as a sketch on the geology of Georgia, an account of the Indians, a treatise on soil and productions, and a description of the rivers. In 1840, Georgia consisted of 691,492 inhabitants:

210,634 white males.  
197,161 white females.  
1,374 free coloured males.  
1,379 free coloured females.  
139,335 slave males.  
141,609 slave females.

A comparative view of the population for fifty-five years (1790-1845) showed an advance from 82,548 to 774,325.

Mr. White included a chapter on the early settlement of Georgia, narrating the arrival of the first settlers and printing some historical documents. The Yazoo Fraud, a gigantic and disgraceful land-transaction of the close of the Eighteenth Century,

was described. There were biographies of all the Georgia governors inserted. The judiciary, the penal code, the militia system, the militia and troops in the Revolutionary War, the officers of the Continental Line, and education — all received detailed treatment in that valuable compendium. Institutions — the colleges of the state, the lunatic asylum, the Georgia Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb — were accorded historical and statistical attention. Banks, railroads, and canals were described. The historical and statistical information regarding the religious bodies showed:

Protestant Episcopal: 26 clergy, 16 parishes, 800 communicants.

Lutheran: 9 ministers, 10 churches, 600 communicants, 2000 members.

Baptist: 1105 churches, 583 ministers, 67,068 members.

Methodist Episcopal: 139 travelling preachers, 43,736 white members, 16,635 coloured members.

Presbyterian: 68 ministers, 107 churches, 5059 communicants.

Jews: (numbers not given).

Disciples of Christ: numerous congregations.

Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church: (numbers not given.)

Roman Catholic: 7 churches.

Protestant Methodists: 25 ministers, 30 congregations.

Mormons: church in Fayette county.

In his preface to the *Statistics*, Mr. White said:

“The difficulties which the author has had to encounter in collecting materials for this work, have far exceeded his expectations; but he must frankly acknowledge, that his labours have been greatly lightened by the assistance of valued friends in Georgia and other States. . . .

“It cannot be expected that a volume containing so many facts, and gathered from so many sources, should be entirely free from errors. All that the compiler hopes for is, that its contents, drawn from the most reliable sources, will be entitled to that credit which is usually awarded to public documents, private family archives and the faithful memories of disinterested living witnesses and contributors.

“While the author does not shrink from just criticism, he respectfully asks the public to remember, that a *Pioneer* in any enterprise has many obstacles to overcome, and is therefore entitled to charitable judgment.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>G. White: *Statistics of the State of Georgia*, pp. 5, 6.

In 1849, Mr. White moved to Marietta. This small city, located in the foothills of the Georgia mountains and offering a cooler climate and a higher altitude than Savannah, afforded favourable conditions for the continuance of Mr. White's scholarly pursuits. There in 1852 he published his authoritative account of Georgia's great land-scandal.

"An accurate account of the Yazoo Fraud compiled from official documents. By George White. Marietta, Georgia: printed at the 'Advocate' job printing office. 1852."  
[ cover-title; pp. 64, 22 cm. ]

Two years later, he published his *Historical Collection of Georgia* — justly described as "a classic in Georgia bibliography."<sup>25</sup> This work followed the same general plan as the *Statistics*, but it was more elaborate and it availed itself of information and figures of more recent date. It was enhanced by numerous illustrations.

"Historical collections of Georgia: containing the most interesting facts, traditions, biographical sketches, anecdotes, etc. relating to its history and antiquities, from its first settlement to the present time. Compiled from original records and official documents. Illustrated by nearly one hundred engravings of public buildings, relics of antiquity, historic localities, natural scenery, portraits of distinguished men, etc., etc. [Seal of the state of Georgia]. By the Rev. George White, M. A., author of the 'Statistics of Georgia.' New York: Pudney & Russell, publishers, No. 79 John-street. 1854."

[ pp. xiv., 688; illustrations; 6 pl., 16 port.; 24 cm. ]

In his *Historical Collections*, Mr. White included many important documents, among them —

The charter of the colony of Georgia.

Extracts from the minutes of the Trustees.

An account of Mary Musgrove, an Indian woman, and the Reverend Thomas Bosomworth, a clergyman.

Names of persons to whom lands were allotted (1741-1754).

The Georgia roll, testifying allegiance to King George III.

Revolutionary documents.

Proceedings of the First Provincial Congress of Georgia (1775).

Proceedings of the Council of Safety (1775-1776).

<sup>25</sup>E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

Names of officers and soldiers who applied for land for their services in the Revolution; of those who went to Mexico. Treaties with the Indians (1733, 1739, 1773, 1783, 1785, 1786, 1790, 1791, 1795, 1796, 1802, 1804, 1805, 1814, 1818, 1821, 1825, 1826, 1828, 1835).

Accounts of difficulties with the Creek and Cherokee Indians. Biographical sketches of distinguished Indians.

Biographical sketches of the governors of Georgia (1733-1854).

Then followed data regarding the different counties of the state — descriptive, historical, statistical, genealogical — more in detail than the corresponding data in the *Statistics*.

In his preface, the author said:

“The flattering reception given by my fellow-citizens to ‘THE STATISTICS OF GEORGIA,’ naturally encouraged me to venture still further in that field, which must ever be a favourite with the patriotic Georgian.

“Ten years of incessant labour, expense, and travel throughout the State, have been cheerfully bestowed, and the ‘HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS OF GEORGIA’ are the result.

“No source of knowledge has been neglected or despised. The Libraries of Charleston, Savannah, Milledgeville, and New York have been diligently searched.

“The Colonial Documents kindly furnished me by the Legislature of Georgia, to aid in the compilation of this work, have been freely used. A large amount of information has been gleaned, moreover, from aged persons — ‘the oldest inhabitants’ of many of our towns and villages — whose memories are proverbially tenacious in regard to events, which made their vivid impressions in early youth. This oral tradition, indeed, often furnishes the warm flesh and blood of the body of History, while documentary evidence can be relied on for the putting together of the dry skeleton alone.

“Correctness rather than elegance has been the end chiefly sought, and the pains unsparingly taken give me a right to claim general reliability for all facts stated. . . .

“This work does not assume to be a consecutive History. It is but a collection of materials for the use of the future historian. It is enough for me, if, by the tough toil of the literary pioneer, I succeed in breaking and gathering

out the stone from the quarry, and in hewing the heavy timber from the mountains, wherewith, hereafter, some accomplished architect, in its full proportion and finished beauty, may rear the fair fabric of the History of Georgia.”<sup>26</sup>

The year of the publication of his *Historical Collections*, Mr. White definitely gave up historical work, and entered wholeheartedly into the service of the Church, first as a missionary to Lagrange and West Point, Georgia. In 1856, he became rector of Trinity Church, Florence, Alabama.<sup>27</sup> Bishop Nicholas Hamner Cobbs (1796-1861), in his address to the Twenty-sixth Annual Convention of the Diocese of Alabama, stated that he had visited Florence, and had “found the Missionary, the Rev. Mr. White, earnest in his work, and evidently giving an impulse to the work.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1858, Mr. White moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where he became assistant rector of Calvary Church, under the Right Reverend James Hervey Otey (1800-1863), Bishop of Tennessee. In 1859, Mr. White became rector, and held this position till 1885, when he retired as rector emeritus.<sup>29</sup>

Just before his arrival, Calvary Church, Memphis, had been much enlarged and handsomely furnished. The sale of about thirty pews had been advertised.<sup>30</sup> During his ministry at Memphis, the city passed through the crisis of the War Between the States and the subsequent Reconstruction Period; it weathered three epidemics of that dreaded scourge, yellow fever. Through all the trying times, Mr. White was faithful to his post, rendering heroic service. He had an important parish and occupied a position of prominence, but he never sought the lime-light and devoted himself to earnest service. For twenty-five years he was prelate of Memphis Consistory No. 4 of the Knights Templar.<sup>31</sup> He was active in the counsels of the Diocese of Tennessee, serving as President of the Standing Committee, Historiographer, and Deputy to the General Convention.

In August, 1866, cholera appeared in Memphis. Several physicians were appointed to constitute a Board of Health, which should meet daily and co-operate with the Health Officer, in presenting the necessary advice and suggestions as to the best means of preventing the ravages of the disease.<sup>32</sup> The city was

<sup>26</sup>G. White: *Historical Collections of Georgia*, pp. v-vi.

<sup>27</sup>E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup>Diocese of Alabama: *Convention Journal*, 1857, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup>E. M. Coulter: *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup>Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Jan. 6, 1858.

<sup>31</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>32</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, June 3, 1873.



made as clean as it was possible to make it, with the means at disposal; Memphis was impoverished as a result of the war, and there were no waterworks, no system of sewerage, and no paved streets.

In June, 1873, Memphis was visited again by cholera. Several thousand people left the city. The highest mortality in a single day was eighteen. By the last of the month, the pestilence had decidedly abated.<sup>33</sup>

But the cholera epidemic was merely a prelude to the yellow fever which broke out less than two months later. It was reported, September 7, 1873, that a disease of a high bilious type had appeared in the plague spot of Memphis known as "Happy Hollow." It was pronounced yellow fever. The doctors hoped that it would soon disappear without spreading to other localities.<sup>34</sup> Soon other cases developed, in various parts of the city. On September 18, it was announced that sixteen had died in the last twenty-four hours. Deaths occurred daily, the contagion was spreading. On October 7, sixty-one deaths were reported. The fever reached its maximum during the week of October 5-11, when 309 deaths were recorded. By the first part of November, the scourge was abating. By November 11, a total of 1166 had died.<sup>35</sup>

At the Forty-second Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee, 1874, Mr. White was appointed on a committee to employ one or more coloured ministers to serve among the negroes of the Diocese. The report of Calvary Church for that year showed 51 baptisms, 37 confirmations, 13 marriages, 62 burials, and a communicant-roll of from three hundred and fifty to four hundred.<sup>36</sup> Mr. White stated that a church for coloured people had been organized, with a fair prospect of success.<sup>37</sup>

The following year, Doctor White stated that he had held services in surrounding places. The committee on the work among the coloured people reported "a growing interest. . . . Prejudices are daily diminishing, and we think there are few disposed to call in question our obligations to introduce among the coloured people a knowledge of the principles, forms, and usages of this branch of the Holy Catholic Church. It gives us much pleasure to report that in the city of Memphis a Parish has been

<sup>33</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, June 21, 1873; June 24, 1873.

<sup>34</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Sept. 15, 1873.

<sup>35</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Nov. 11, 1873.

<sup>36</sup>Diocese of Tennessee: Convention Journal, 1874, p. 60.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 85.

organized and delegates admitted into this Convention. An educated clergyman, Rev. Mr. Jackson, has been called to the Rectorship, and his support is received from the Board of Domestic Missions. This Parish has been organized about fourteen months, and yet numbers twenty-five communicants. There are also two candidates for Holy Orders in this Parish." Calvary Church had received a new organ; and had contributed very liberally toward the support of the Church Home and other objects.<sup>38</sup>

At the same Convention, White was appointed Historiographer of the Diocese. He collected various papers pertaining to the Church and the parishes of Tennessee, and made appeals to the clergy for co-operating in furnishing him with information regarding their churches; but he never completed the history. He was already past the allotted threescore years and ten, and he was rector of a growing parish.

The year 1878 is recalled as the year of perhaps the worst yellow fever epidemic ever known to America. During that critical period, Dr. White and his wife went from house to house, ministering to the sick and burying the dead. Their son, Dehon White, died of the disease.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting to trace the progress of that grave disaster. On July 24, 1878, the Memphis *Public Ledger* voiced its plea, "Let us have quarantine." Six deaths had occurred in New Orleans. Memphis, being north of the Louisiana port on the Mississippi river, derived a considerable part of its commerce from that city. Steamers appeared daily. Hence it was recommended that all ships from New Orleans be quarantined. The proposition, however, was condemned by thirty-four Memphis doctors, "some of whom never saw and never treated a case of yellow fever." Next day, the *Public Ledger* reported that both the Health Officer and the Secretary of the Board of Health had opposed the quarantine. "Steamers from New Orleans almost daily reach this port," the paper contended; "and yet there is no inquiry about an examination made of any boat." Fourteen cases had been reported in New Orleans; seven had proved fatal.

On July 27 three members of the crew of the "John Porter," bound from New Orleans to Pittsburgh, had died of yellow fever at Vicksburg and had been buried there. Still some of the physicians urged that alarm was unnecessary. Still it was resolved to

<sup>38</sup>Diocese of Tennessee: Convention Journal, 1875, pp. 25, 52-53, 69.

<sup>39</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, pp. 418-9.

establish a quarantine at the foot of President's Island, twelve miles below Memphis; and all vessels from Vicksburg and New Orleans were to be subjected to rigid examination.<sup>40</sup> Two days afterwards, the Board of Health met. A quarantine officer was elected. It was decided that all New Orleans freight destined for Memphis should be unloaded and inspected. Sick persons entering the city were to be examined, and all strangers from New Orleans should be sent to the quarantine-station. The mayor issued a proclamation establishing the quarantine.<sup>41</sup> Next day, the *Public Ledger* recommended that the quarantine be extended to railroads as well as steamers. On the 31st of July, a large number of citizens, the members of the Chamber of Commerce and of the Cotton Exchange, met to take action for preventing the visitation of yellow fever. Sanitary measures were outlined by the President of the Board of Health. Front yards, cellars, gutters, and premises were to be cleaned; from a hundred to two hundred men were required; a thousand dollars would be needed. Still it was predicted that there would be no yellow fever in Memphis.<sup>42</sup>

August 1st rigid measures were taken. All New Orleans freight was ordered stopped. Reports from that city showed that the yellow fever there was "of a violent type and different from any that had hitherto prevailed there. . . . It baffles the skill of the physicians and is exceptionally fatal to children." The people were rapidly leaving the stricken city.<sup>43</sup>

A boy of seventeen died at the quarantine-station at President's Island, August 6. As yet there was no yellow fever in Memphis; and it was announced that "the city is in a better sanitary condition than it has ever been. For this the Board of Health and Dr. [J. H.] Erskine [Health Officer] merit the thanks of the entire community. The streets are cleansed, as are also the premises of private parties, and the good work continues." The sentry force now embraced nearly three hundred men. There had been bad faith, however, on the part of the captain of the steamer "Golden Crown" and his clerk; they had reported, when their ship passed Memphis, that there was no yellow fever on board. From that boat, however, five persons from New Orleans had been found and had been removed from the city by the Health Officer, and there was a woman on the vessel sick with yellow fever. The New Orleans epidemic was

<sup>40</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, July 27, 1878.

<sup>41</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, July 28, 1878.

<sup>42</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, July 31, 1878.

<sup>43</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 1, 1878.

much worse than reported: "it exercises a general depression of all business and much alarm exists among the people, who are getting away as fast as possible."<sup>44</sup> Next day, over three hundred deaths were said to have occurred in New Orleans. Small boats of refugees were endeavoring to run the gauntlet of the quarantine and to land near Memphis.<sup>45</sup>

There was rumour of a case of yellow fever in Memphis August 9; but the statement was denied. The Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad Company was enjoined from unloading sugar, coffee, and hardware in Memphis. It was protested that such a boycott would prove a hardship, and that the precaution was unnecessary.<sup>46</sup>

The oncoming menace could not be blocked. The comforting assurances of the medical authorities were not weapons powerful enough to cope with deadly reality, and science was yet to ascertain the cause and method of preventing the spread of that fearful disease. On August 13, the first case in Memphis was officially announced. Mrs. Kate Bionda, who kept an eating-house largely frequented by river-men, died. New Orleans recorded 519 cases up to date, and a considerable epidemic existed at Grenada, Mississippi — more than a hundred cases.<sup>47</sup>

Ten yellow fever cases were reported in Memphis by the Board of Health, August 14. The panic was general; there was a great rush for the trains and for suburban residences. "At no time within the history of our city has there been such a sudden or effective panic among the people of Memphis."

"Every hack in the city last night was in demand, and the way that great trunks, small satchels, bundles, lunches, baskets, etc., were piled up on the depot platforms was enough to create a panic among the most fearless who went to bid their friends good-bye. . . . At the Louisville depot there were over five hundred people. These were there to 'take the first,' and of course the cars were crowded. The train numbered six passenger cars and two sleepers. Every seat was occupied, and there was hardly standing room on the train. The baggage and express cars were also crowded by people who were willing to do anything in order to get out of town. . . . There was a similar scene at the Charleston depot, where hundreds of people had flocked

<sup>44</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 6, 1878.

<sup>45</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 7, 1878.

<sup>46</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 9, 1878.

<sup>47</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 13, 1878.

in order to take the train. . . . About four hundred persons left on this train. This morning the outgoing train on the Louisville road was crowded, 1000 or more persons having left by this road since yesterday."

Towns were quarantining against Memphis. Some of the stores closed; and funeral processions were prohibited.<sup>48</sup>

August 15, thirty-four new cases were announced and six deaths. The railroad offices were crowded with people making arrangements to leave the city; all persons able to get away were going. The trains were "jammed with panic-stricken men, women, and children. Many go far north, but many have no idea where they will land, for all towns around the country have already quarantined or are about to quarantine against Memphis. . . . The demoralization of the people is most lamentable, but it is useless to attempt to calm them." The evidence of suffering, want, and distress among the poorer people, unable to leave, was terrible. A telegram was sent to the Secretary of War asking for a thousand tents into which to remove the poor; an appeal for rations was dispatched to the government. It was proposed to send the helpless and impoverished people out of the city and provide encampments for them.<sup>49</sup>

Every day new cases developed. The Memphis papers reported forty-three deaths on August 27, seventy-three deaths on August 29, 102 deaths on September 2. On September 5, there were 116 deaths recorded; and for the next two weeks the average daily toll numbered more than a hundred. From August 15 to November 13, some 3773 deaths from yellow fever occurred in Memphis. For three months, the scourge raged with fury; for at least a month longer there was a state of awful anxiety. The grief and bereavement, the sorrow over lost loved ones, and the general depression — all are beyond imagination.

The Bishop of Tennessee, Doctor Charles Todd Quintard (1824-1898), was on his way to New York, to attend a meeting of the House of Bishops when, on August 14, he found on the train a number of the citizens of Memphis, fleeing from the yellow fever, which had just been declared epidemic. When he reached his destination, he made an appeal for money. Two Sisters of St. Mary left New York for Memphis, August 23, in order to assist in the epidemic. They had just arrived in the metropolis two weeks before for rest and refreshment. "News

<sup>48</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 14, 1878.

<sup>49</sup>Memphis *Public Ledger*, Aug. 15, 1878.

came of the breaking out of the yellow fever," said Bishop Quintard. "Without delay or trepidation they went back to the post of duty and of danger." Doctor Houghton, the rector of the Church of the Transfiguration, gave them his blessing on their departure. He said: "I have had a varied experience, and have witnessed much, but I have seen no braver sight than that which I saw in Varick street, in front of the Trinity Infirmery, when just at evening I blessed those sisters sitting alone in the carriage which was to take them to the train for the journey to Memphis."

Some thirty clergymen in New York volunteered their services to Bishop Quintard; but he told them that the clergy of Memphis did not desire any unacclimated priests. The regular Memphis clergymen were Doctor George C. Harris, dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, Doctor George White, rector of Calvary Church, and the Reverend Charles Carroll Parsons, rector of Grace Church. Those who were permitted to aid them in their work in the plague-stricken area of Tennessee were the Reverend W. T. Dickinson Dalzell, D. D., of Shreveport, Louisiana, and the Reverend Louis Sandford Schuyler, of the Diocese of Northern New Jersey. Mr. Schuyler died in Memphis of the yellow fever, September 17, in his twenty-eighth year; Mr. Parsons, of Grace Church, died September 6, in his fortieth year, likewise a victim of the epidemic. The Reverend John Miller Schwrar, rector of St. Thomas's Church, Somerville, and Immanuel Church, Lagrange, died October 11, in his forty-third year — a third victim. Four sisters of the Order of St. Mary died during September and October of the yellow fever — Sisters Constance, Thecla, Ruth and Frances.

There were the "most generous outpourings of gifts and contributions of money, food, clothing, and medicines to our stricken people," said Bishop Quintard in his address to the Forty-seventh Annual Convention of the Diocese. "The liberality of the people of the North was so ample, prompt, free, and so beneficent, that no words can do it justice. From Maine to California, and from the Lakes to the Gulf, all aided in the kind work. Not less than \$500,000 came from the cities, towns and states of the North, and \$200,000 from the southern portion of the Union, to Memphis alone. Besides this enormous sum of money, hundreds of carloads of provisions, clothing and medicines were contributed, and were carried to Memphis by the railways and express companies without charge. Contributions were sent from Canada, England, Germany and France."

During the epidemic, Doctor White lost his son Dehon. Several times the Memphis papers noted his own sickness (presumably from yellow fever). For example, on September 30, it is stated that "Rev. Dr. Geo. E. White, rector of Calvary church, is doing tolerably well."

Although nearly eighty, the good doctor was active at his post of duty. Nor were his interests confined to his parish. At the General Convention of 1880, he introduced a resolution condemning the support of churches by means of raffling, fairs, lotteries, and other such devices, maintaining that the gift should come directly from the churchman or the rector.<sup>50</sup>

At the Forty-ninth Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee, Bishop Quintard stated that Doctor White had asked him to announce that he had collected "a large amount of material, throwing light upon the history of the Church in Tennessee; but that the omission of some of the clergy and laity to respond to his repeated applications for sketches of the history of their Parishes has been and still is a serious impediment in the way." "The venerable Doctor earnestly requests that the clergy and laity of the several Parishes will furnish him such items of parochial history as may be of interest in completing the history of the Church in this Diocese."<sup>51</sup> It is to be regretted that Doctor White was unable to compile such a history. No scholar in the American Church was better fitted to produce a more painstaking, systematic, and comprehensive account of the Church and its work in the various parishes and missions.

The Reverend Davis Sessums, who later became Bishop of Louisiana, began his services as assistant at Calvary Church, Memphis, April 1, 1883. At first, his salary was \$1000 a year; but after the first year, it was raised to \$1800.<sup>52</sup> Two years later, Doctor White retired from active duty and became rector emeritus of the parish. He was venerated and beloved, and it was recognized that he had made a considerable contribution to the city as well as to the Church. A letter, signed by James B. Cook, architect, appeared in the *Memphis Daily Appeal*, January 7, 1887, crediting Doctor White with the beauty and present status of Calvary Church, as restored. The writer said that he had known Doctor White for thirty years.

"For thirty long years, the day in and the day out, in the seed time, in war times, in pestilence and in famine, as

<sup>50</sup>*Memphis Daily Avalanche*, May 1, 1887.

<sup>51</sup>Diocese of Tennessee: Convention Journal, 1881.

<sup>52</sup>*Memphis Daily Appeal*, Jan. 7, 1887.

the faithful shepherd he watched from the sanctuary of the church over his flock. At the christening he was there, at the bedside of the sick and dying he was there, and at the burial of the dead to administer the last sad rites he was there again. . . . His aim . . . was to build up for his flock a sacred edifice with a sermon in every stone. With a faith that never wearied, he was steady at the helm. . . . Hardly a month passed but he consulted me on the work — plans were made and remade and as constantly laid away, for his vestry would say not yet, but with an iron will and a strong determination to still push on, and but a few years since his faith was rewarded, for the time had then come in the remodeling of the old church and its completion as it now stands. To him alone all the credit is due. I, as the architect, was simply the instrument in his hands to carry out his ideas. The internal arrangements, the chancel, sanctuary, and nave were all his. He symbolized the whole. . . . For thirty years many and many has been the time, from his own scanty means, has he paid for repairs and alterations rather than burden others or let the old building want for the same. In the restoration and remodeling he was more than liberal, for among other items he had placed at the chancel the rood rail — a symbolic feature — dividing the nave from the choir. This he paid for himself. . . . I can bear further witness that not a stone was placed except through him. The organ, windows, altar, lectern, fonts are there, directly or indirectly, through him.”

On the 30th of April, Bishop Quintard was called to Doctor White’s dying bed. The Reverend George Patterson, D. D., of Grace Church, Memphis, and the Reverend Charles F. Collins, of the Church of the Holy Innocents, Trenton, Tennessee, accompanied him. Prayers were said at the bedside, and the Bishop pronounced the parting benediction. The faithful pastor entered into eternal life at half-past two o’clock in the afternoon. His last three years had been years of great physical weakness, and practically of disability; “but his mind was clear to the last and his cheerful spirit enabled him to bear all his sufferings with Christian resignation.”<sup>53</sup> He lived at 268 Vance Street. His daughters, Mrs. James T. Leach of Memphis and Miss Tallulah Georgia White, had cared for their father during the eighteen months that preceded his death. “No word of com-

<sup>53</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, p. 419.



plaint or unkind criticism has fallen from the lips of this beautiful old man in these long days of sickness.”<sup>54</sup>

The day after his death, the *Memphis Daily Advocate* contained the following tribute:

“The most marked attribute of his character was his childlike simplicity. The voice of hunger or want or suffering never went away unheard by him. Another marked characteristic which distinguished him from almost all men was this, that he never was known to say an unkind word about any human being. As a rector, his rendition of his part of the service, by its simplicity, its earnestness and cleanness of elocution, he almost stood without a rival; and this morning, if the question were asked of the citizenship of Memphis, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, what human being in the past quarter of a century had been most conspicuous for its humility, for its kindness of heart and sympathy with men, with one accord the voice of the great city would name the name of this venerable old man, who loved Memphis, who loved her people, and who had a heart full of sympathy for all her children.”

The morning after Doctor White’s death, May 1, 1887 — the Third Sunday after Easter and the feast of St. Philip and St. James — Bishop Quintard preached and celebrated the Holy Communion in Calvary Church. In announcing the beloved rector’s death to the congregation, he said:

“All hearts in this congregation are bowed this morning in a common sorrow. There is one thrill of sympathy that vibrates in every soul. The venerable pastor who for nine and twenty years has fed this flock has entered upon that rest which remaineth for the people of God, has been called to the reward that awaits the faithful priest. Could we be left to our own hearts we would sit with our present grief in silence; but I must speak a few words to-day of him that is gone. You know full well what his life has been. You know how he called forth from those who knew him best, the salute, ‘Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.’ You know how he moved about among all men, simply and unpretendingly, and as free from self-consciousness as a child. You know how spontaneous was his tenderness of heart, and how he manifested towards all that tact of love, which is so much better than the most consummate art.

<sup>54</sup>*Memphis Daily Advocate*, May 1, 1887.

It was the steadfast heart surcharged with love, and the loyal soul that ever looked to God, in which were the springs of your pastor's power.

“His life closed with a long illness, so patiently endured, and so uncomplainingly borne that they who watched by his bedside found it the very school of Christ, in which they learned lessons of entire submission to the will of God, and of hope in all its richness and fullness. . . .

“Think, good people, what the close of such a life teaches; a life devoted to the moral elevation of his fellow-men; a life altogether unselfish, and spent in doing good to man; a life that has been a living epistle, known and read of all men; a life devoted to God and the service of the altar; a life abounding in the ministrations of grace and the consolations of the gospel, a life conspicuous for its simplicity and holiness. Surely such a life, crowned with a peaceful death, is well worth living. It is more glorious than that of the hero who wins his laurels in fields of blood, or of the statesman who achieves his triumphs on the Senate floor. Great are the rewards of such a life.”<sup>55</sup>

The vestry of Calvary Church, at a meeting after Doctor White's death, prepared and presented to his surviving family a beautiful testimony, speaking of their late rector as “a simple-minded, humble and lowly rector, who left behind him noble works, a life of beautiful simplicity, entire devotion to his flock, a godly, sober and righteous life.”<sup>56</sup>

On All Saints' Day, 1887, there was consecrated in Calvary Church an exquisite brass memorial pulpit, “the loving gift of a large number of persons, young and old, who wished to testify their affection and perpetuate the memory of the Rev. George White, D. D.” There was also dedicated “a jewelled sanctuary lamp,” given by the daughters of Doctor and Mrs. White.<sup>57</sup>

Doctor White married young. His wife was Miss Elizabeth Miller of Savannah, Georgia; and she walked beside him for more than sixty years. She passed away only a short time before her husband's death. There were eight children, of whom three survived their father: George T. G. White, for thirty years southern manager of the Equitable Assurance Company of New York; Mrs. Laura Leach; and Miss Tallulah Georgia White.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup>Diocese of Tennessee: Convention Journal, 1887, pp. 30-31.

<sup>56</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>57</sup>Diocese of Tennessee: Convention Journal, 1888, p. 77.

<sup>58</sup>Tallulah G. White: *op. cit.*, p. 419.

The affection with which his children regarded him is reflected in the words of his daughter:

“Dr. White came as near being a natural Christian as it is possible for a human. Born with a kindly spirit, he acquired profound faith in the goodness, mercy and justice of God, and his own work in life added year by year Christian graces, until his latter years became a constant benediction to all with whom he was brought in touch.”<sup>59</sup>

The Fifty-fifth Annual Convention of the Diocese of Tennessee, resolved by rising vote “that the Church in the Diocese of Tennessee holding in highest esteem the labors of this child-like man of God — who like his Master went about doing good — in loving memory of his beautiful life, ask each member to hold in lasting remembrance the golden example of this his faithful servant, who has passed from the scene of his earthly labors unto the Paradise of the Blessed.”<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup>Diocese of Tennessee: Convention Journal, 1888, p. 49.









