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# In the Gray Moss Country

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WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY  
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
150 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

Price, with Lesson Helps for three months' study, 25c.

Conquest Series—II

# In the Gray Moss Country

## *What the Story Means*

**I**N the "sunny South," where the long gray moss hangs from the trees, and flowers blossom all the year round, Home Mission work has been carried on so long that we can now see definite results.

In the old days the land was tilled by Negro slaves. Wealthy white families lived on large plantations and shipped cotton all over the world. Besides the cotton great crops of rice were raised in the Gulf states, but it was such unhealthy work that the field hands everywhere dreaded being sold to go to the "rice fields." In that section one may still ride for miles without coming to a village, or even to a house. Forest, swamp and hammock land separate the settlements, and make it difficult to carry on much of the usual school and church work. Long journeys are required to get from place to place, and it is almost impossible to hold conventions of church societies as in more favored sections.

It is not easy for the young people reared in comfortable homes, provided with the best of school privileges and surrounded by Christian privileges, to realize what their lives would be without these blessings. When the Civil War ended, thousands of children and young people, freed from slavery and scattered through the South, were without such opportunities. What could they do? The country over which the war had swept was left desolate. The plantation homes were in ruins, and fathers and sons had been killed in battle. Those who were left were without homes, land or money — and even without food and clothing save what was given by kind hands from day to day.

This is the story of what has been done to help such boys and girls and of the way in which they have profited by the help given—better still, it is also the story of what they have done for themselves.

## 1865

**S**UPPOSE we take 1865 as a landmark. It will surely help us to a better understanding of the progress that has been made in the upward path. It marks the beginning of the long journey of the colored people of the South from poverty and ignorance to the better conditions of comfort and intelligence which so many of them enjoy to-day.

In October, 1865, a New England party landed at the dock of a small Southern town. White tents could be plainly seen from the deck of the river boat as they came near the land, for although peace had been declared the soldiers had not all been sent back to their homes. When the armies marched through the land the music of the fife and drum drew after them another army—a ragged, hungry crowd of refugees, that passed from place to place and stopped wherever night found them. To relieve the distress of these people the Government of the United States established a Freedman's Bureau, not only to provide supplies of food and clothing but to protect the helpless and to give advice and counsel when needed. General O. O. Howard was at the head of the department, and after his death it was said of him that he left a "million dollar record," because he expended that amount "without a cent of graft." (We used to call it cheating. What do you think it should be called?) It is worth while to remember that about General Howard, besides his work in establishing schools for white and for colored children.

On the dock as the boat came to the landing, was a crowd of black people, men, women and children, clad in every kind of garment that would serve for covering. The strange medley of lace gowns, plush coats, linen dusters and velvet hats was amusing as well as pitiful. One small boy of three or four years was buttoned from chin to ankles in a black cloth jacket that had been made for a slim lady; the sleeves had been cut off at the elbows, and the whole effect of the costume was very funny.

Up in the North barrels and boxes of clothing had been made up and forwarded for the refugees, and these had provided most of the queer outfits. But just think of sending lace dresses and plush coats! Yet people nowadays sometimes do just such absurd things when packing boxes for frontier ministers or for our Homes or schools. Garments unsuitable for the climate or for the conditions of those who

are to wear them, or too old to be serviceable, should never be put into missionary boxes.

Homes could not come in barrels, and some provision had to be made for the shelter of this company of refugees. "The Hive," a large three-story house without doors or windows, and with wide piazzas on each floor, was filled to "standing room only" with the little black waifs. Army blankets had been given out for bedding and hominy and bacon provided for food. Cooking was done outdoors, over chip fires. The streets were grass-grown and pigs and turkey buzzards were the garbage gatherers. The mail-boat came once a week.

An old building once used as a cotton warehouse had been fitted up with rude benches for a general meeting-place. On Sundays it was used as a church, and all day long it rang with the sound of prayer and praise. One thing must be remembered to the credit of the colored race—they believe in God, and in all the hard years of their history they have trusted in Him for help. At the first Sunday-school service held in the warehouse only eleven out of the six hundred present could read. But how they could sing!

When General Howard and a company of teachers from "up No'th" came, everybody who could walk joined the crowd that gathered at the warehouse. The place could not begin to hold the eager throng, and they climbed the near-by trees and perched on posts, singing lustily,

"Good news, brethren! Good news!  
Good news came to-day."

The good General gave a kind and friendly talk to the people, telling them about the teachers who had come to help them, and of what he should expect of them as pupils. Then, after an earnest prayer for God's guidance in the affairs of the people and the nation, he went back to the boat; the drums kept time for the marching feet of the soldiers for whom other boats were waiting to take them back home—and for once the refugee army staid behind. The going of the soldiers and the coming of the teachers marked the beginning of another sort of march. The ministry of the Christian teachers who went from some of the best homes and schools in the land to live among the poor and lowly and to help lift them up, makes 1865 a landmark worth noting.

## How the Schools Began

THE story of this one special company of teachers and pupils is that of many schools that were started at this time. A church or any building that could be obtained was used as the schoolhouse. Webster's blue-backed spelling-book, copies of the New Testament, slates, a blackboard and reading chart made up the school outfit. The names of the children caused a good deal of confusion at first, for many of them had been separated from their parents, and did not know where they were, or even who they were, for the fortunes of war had broken up all family life. So the children had taken any names that suited their fancy, and the changes were perplexing. A boy who had been known as "Pe'simmons Dozier" informed the teacher one morning that his name was George Washington Grant, and stoutly stuck to it thereafter, so the change was made on the record.

As new people came and old residents returned to the homes they had left during the war, business gradually revived. The colored people had better opportunities to earn money, and soon they began to build cabin homes. Many of these were very rude, but they were the *first free homes*. Often they were made of slabs, with roofs thatched with palmetto bark, and barrels for chimneys. Life was hard under such conditions—too hard for many of the brightest boys and girls, who sickened and died. There was no efficient protection for life and property, and for a long time people were afraid to live out of the towns. The old order of things was changed for both white and colored people, and both had hardships to endure, but the heavier burden, by far, fell to the lot of the Negroes.

Christian people soon saw that help must be given to the millions of freedmen in the way of educating and training them to be intelligent citizens. Schools must be provided, that would, in time, furnish teachers for more schools. Thousands of dollars were given to establish schools of various grades, some of which, later, became colleges, and scholarships were provided for those unable to pay even the low rates charged for tuition.

Business men talk of "good returns" from investments of money. But no business man ever received larger interest on his money than has been paid on the money thus invested in boys and girls. As a rule

the pupils in these schools have, in their turn, helped many others, feeling in honor bound to pay back, in this way, what has been done for them. Money invested in souls as well as bodies always "pays."

But thoughtful people soon saw that more than the study of books was necessary. The hands needed training as well as the head, and so industrial work came into the plan of education. This has been a wonderful blessing to the South, as to other sections of the country. In many schools of the South to-day you may visit handsome brick buildings, with fine finishings and furnishings of wood, all the work having been done by students. Over thirty trades and industries have been introduced into the schools for boys. There are not so many for the girls, but enough to make them self-supporting.

Evening schools have helped many a working boy and girl to get an education. Among the first of these were those in the saw-mill camps. Fifty or more men and boys would gather in some old building and, by the light of a few candles, receive their first lessons in reading. Often a boy, his father and his grandfather would sit side by side and study from the same book. Some learned quickly—for others it was hard, painstaking work. They had no kindergarten plays and attractive "busy work" to help them over the hard places in books.



It "Pays" to Help Them

helped him to begin its study. Of course the teacher gladly promised all the help she could give. At the end of the school year the boy had mastered the arithmetic. In after years he became a college president, and whenever he visited his native place he always called to thank anew the teacher who had "awakened" him.

Few people ask in these days, "Can the colored children learn?" But should you hear such a question you may be very sure that the one asking does not read the church papers or belong to a Home Missionary Society.

## Some Special Schools and Homes

**H**AMPTON INSTITUTE, in Virginia, was among the first schools to provide industrial and trade instruction. It was founded by General Armstrong, in 1868, for Negro and Indian students. Hundreds of its graduates have carried the "Hampton idea" of self-helping industry all through the south and southwest. Perhaps the brightest star in its crown is Booker T. Washington, who came to its door footsore and hungry to find there his place among the world's noted workers. His lifework is Tuskegee Institute, in Alabama, where he reaches from twelve to fourteen hundred students every year. In the farming districts of the "Black Belt" he helps and encourages the boys and girls and the men and women to improve their home surroundings and to make the most of every chance to help others.

The American Missionary Society was one of the first to enter this great field, and its schools have made a splendid showing. Atlanta University has a notable group of instructors, men and women standing for the best and highest interests of their race.

Spellman Seminary, in Atlanta, under the direction of the Baptist church, is one of the finest schools for Negro girls to be found in the South. To see a group of its graduates is to learn a new lesson of what Negro girls may be and do under favorable surroundings.

A visit to the school of Miss Lucy Laney, in Augusta, Georgia, will teach another lesson of how the right kind of help keeps growing. One summer in speaking to a Chautauqua audience, she introduced herself as "the product of a mission school." The people of Augusta had such confidence in her ability that they gave her the use of a hospital building with much of the needful furnishings, for the work of her class in nurse training. This school is under the Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian church.

The Methodist Episcopal Church South and other Southern churches, did much religious work among the Negroes before the war, but little was done to educate them even in elementary book knowledge until after they became free.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, which always ranks with the pioneers in good work, was promptly in this new field. The Freedmen's Aid Society was organized in 1866, having for one of its mottoes, "Christian education is the great need of the times." It is true for every time, and it is the kind of education that never "spoils" those receiving it. The thousands of Christian ministers and teachers

who have been prepared in these schools to lead and help their people bear no resemblance to that other army that followed the soldiers but a few years ago. The helping hand of the churches has largely made possible a supply of teachers for the public schools for Negro children. But these are still unable to provide for anywhere near the total number of children of school age, so that there is yet need of the church schools if the children are to be saved from lives of ignorance and sin.

At Nashville, Tennessee, one of the great educational centers, where many young people gather year after year, are professional schools, out of whose doors pass doctors, dentists and druggists to join the great army of workers.

Atlanta and New Orleans each have theological schools of note for the training of the ministry. It is said that the beginning of this school in New Orleans was carried in Dr. Hartzell's pocket for many months—that is, that he paid its first expenses himself.

This is by no means a complete list of the schools that have won distinction in the South, but one gleaned from here and there may serve to show how much all have accomplished in the years since the coming of freedom.



Mr. David Irwin Martin (said to be the leading Negro violinist and teacher in New York City) and his little son. Mr. Martin was an Allen Industrial School boy.

## Woman's Home Missionary Society

THE special needs of the women and girls of the Negro race seem for a time to have been overlooked. The home idea had never entered their lives in the days of slavery, and in the hard early days of freedom they had lived in gangs, or crowds, afraid to leave what small degree of protection they could thus find. Cabins were crowded with men, women and children often herded together more like animals than like human beings.

When Dr. and Mrs. Hartzell (since our Bishop in Africa) went to live in New Orleans, in connection with the missionary work of our church there, they saw the wretched homes and how impossible it was to make better ones until the mothers were taught to do the many helpful things that a good home needs. Mrs. Hartzell and others went among the Negro women and won their love by their interest in them and their problems. Classes were formed for them in different parts of the city, and women in the North were told of the needed work. The result was the organization of the Woman's Home Missionary Society, in Cincinnati, Ohio, in July, 1880. This is a date to be remembered, and it is good to know that our great society, which has helped so many girls and women of all races that live in this dear land of ours, began its work by helping those in the little cabin homes of the South, the Negro women who did not know what the word home ought to mean, and the Negro children who had had no chance. Those who started the work did not dream how it would grow. It was just seed-sowing then. But God had plans for wonderful growth—He knew that not only the Negroes, but the Indians, the Alaskans, the Porto Ricans, the Japanese and Chinese, as well as white children of many nationalities, would, later, have "a chance" through the loving mother-care of the society thus started.

One of the first plans of the new society was to give the girls in the Freedmen's Aid or other schools a year of training in a Model Home. Contrast what they found there and learned there with the conditions in the cabin homes from which they came, and you can understand a little of what a wonder it was to those first girls, and how it transformed their lives. When they learned that cabin homes could be kept clean and neat and sweet, that clothing, even if of coarse material, could be neatly made, and that food, however rude the outfit, could be cooked well and served well—when they learned

these things the next step was to take the knowledge back to their homes and make changes for the better, to make homes of their own (for many of them soon married, of course), model homes, and to show the mothers and children of the schools in which they went to teach, better ways of living.

Thayer Home, in South Atlanta, Georgia, was the first Model Home of the Woman's Home Missionary Society. It was dedicated in 1883.

The story of what has been done through even one of these Industrial Homes is quite too long to tell here. Training of head, of



Thayer Home

hands and of heart has been the watchword in all of them. Some of the girls come, like Ella C., from work in the field. She and her mother walked fifteen miles one morning, reaching one of our Homes as the family sat down to breakfast. The mother asked to see the "head lady" soon, as she had to hurry back to work. When the superintendent came, the mother said:

"I brung yer this girl for she gave me no peace." Then she added, holding out a silver dollar, "It's all I got in de world but I'll send yer another soon as I gets it."

There was no room for the girl—so it seemed—and no money with which to provide food and other needs; but the superintendent had faith, and like many another girl since, she stayed; soon the Lord put it into the hearts of some young people to send to that Home fifteen dollars for “some girl.” Don’t you see that He meant to have her stay?

Ella proved very apt in learning the ways of the school, but was not strong. At the close of the term, three months later, she went home, not to return. But she often wrote for “pieces to sew” and “pieces to speak,” for she was teaching the children around her home all that she knew. Near the close of the school year a letter came from a white lady saying that she had taken Ella into her own home and cared for her, but that now she had gone to the heavenly home. She added, “I am a Southern woman, and do not believe in most of the school work for these black folks, but what this one girl has done for her people has taught me a lesson. The school she had here has done more good than all the preachers they ever had, and some of us are going to see it carried on now. I must respect a place that can put so much good into a girl’s life in a few short months.”

Girls who spent long hours doing housework in other people’s homes, attended evening classes and finally succeeded in becoming trained nurses, and thus being able to do more for themselves and their people. Frequently mothers and grandmothers, in the early days, came to school with the children in the primary class. One of these said:

“My children are all married, and my old man works for me, and he says, ‘Now, ole lady, you go to school an’ learn to read the paper to me.’” This she learned to do, to her great satisfaction, when fifty-five years old.

At one Home where the little folks learned housework by the use of small furniture and dishes, the mothers often came to hear and see the lessons. One of them said, “I don’t know how to set the table like you all do, so I want to learn and get better wages for work.”

The story of the sacrifices made by many of these parents to send their children to school would fill many pages. What the girls have done to make the world better would fill many more.



A Kindergarten Circle in One of Our Schools

## After Many Years

A GIRL graduate of Meharry Medical School at Nashville, Tenn., wrote to a friend, "To-day I shall receive my diploma, and I am glad. When I leave here to-morrow I shall go with less than three dollars over my car-fare to make my way in the world, but I am not discouraged."

Some of the children who stood on the dock in clothes of many colors and kinds, and who lodged in the "Hive," may be found in comfortable homes of their own to-day; their children attend a graded school that stands on the site of the old warehouse. A good brick church has taken the place of the old building.

One girl who was helped over hard places by her teacher—as so many have been helped—finally completed her studies and became a successful nurse. She had to care for herself and for other members of her family, but after two years she sent back to the one who had helped her the full amount of the money lent, with interest, and wrote, "More than the money, it seems to me now, was the help and encouragement you gave me, and that I never can repay except as I pass it on to others."

Each of the many Homes maintained for Negro girls by the Woman's Home Missionary Society has been called into existence by some special need. In them hundreds of girls have felt the influence of the home life, the school privileges and the Christian instruction. The missionary spirit has marked all the work, and from these Homes several girls have already gone as missionaries to Africa, while others, as organizers, deaconesses and teachers of our society, carry on the message "for the love of Christ and in His name." If you could see the long line of helpful workers who have gone out from these Homes, you would say that it told a wonderful story.

But there are still hundreds of girls waiting and praying for the door of such opportunities to open for them. It never will if we forget to be helpful. One of our teachers wrote on a recent opening day, "There has been a continuous line of girls in the office to-day applying for help to come in, and we lack the money to take them. It takes the heart out of me to say 'No.'" So while much has been done and many a conquest made, there remains still much for our young folks to do in making other victories possible. A letter lies

before me from the mother of eight girls, and her message is a good one for the close of this story: "I pray for the Home Mission people every day, and thank God that He sent them to help me with my crowd of girls. I used to worry and wonder what I could do to save them from evil, but, thanks to the Home and school, none of them has given me an hour's trouble. They are all doing well and all in the church."

Our church hymnal has a Conquest hymn in which are these lines for us:

"For not with swords loud clashing,  
Nor roll of stirring drums;  
With deeds of love and mercy  
The heavenly kingdom comes.

Thy cross is lifted o'er us;  
We journey in its light:  
The crown awaits the conquest;  
Lead on, O God of might."



Almost Ready for the Kindergarten



