

# Northern Messenger

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## A Modern Elizabeth Fry.

THE CAREER OF FRANCES JOSEPH, A COLORED WOMAN, WHO HAS DEVOTED HER LIFE TO PRISON EVANGELIZATION.—WORKING IN TWENTY-ONE STATES.

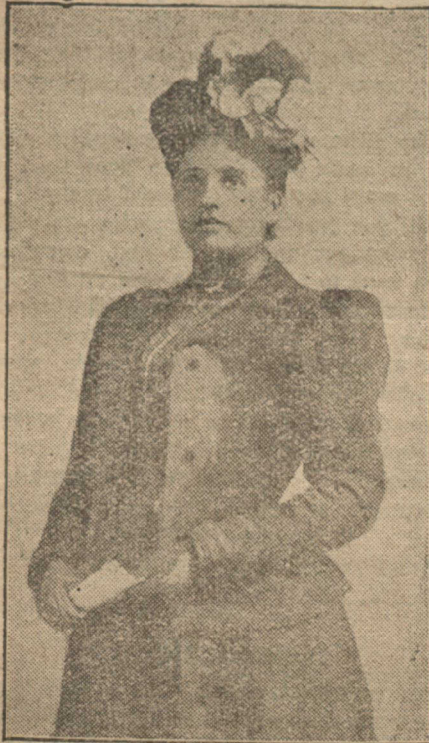
As beautiful Elizabeth Fry, the angel of Newgate and many another prison, and next to Howard greatest of prison reformers, labored among criminals of her time, Frances Joseph, a woman of the negro race, is laboring among prisoners, black and white, in Southern jails. That Elizabeth Fry, wealthy and of the highest social position, should impress people of station and authority, overcome prejudice and win sympathy and co-operation, is small matter for marvel; but that the daughter of a lowly negro minister, a seamstress making her living by her needle should succeed in doing what Mrs. Joseph has accomplished, may be cause for considerable wonder.

Mrs. Joseph is the first American woman to choose as her life mission work among negro prisoners. Her labors, begun for her own people, were quickly extended to white unfortunates. 'I have letters from many white mothers thanking me for kindness to their children. Young men from everywhere come to New Orleans, particularly at Mardi Gras time; they get into trouble; I find them in jail; write to their people and help them all I can.' Her regular visits and ministrations include the prison-yards of both races.

She has accomplished great good, and commands the respectful consideration of her community, the commendation of the



GOD'S MESSENGER IN THE JAIL-YARD.



MRS. FRANCES JOSEPH.  
As she appeared in Spurgeon's Tabernacle.

Mayor and other officials of New Orleans; the confidence of the Governor of her State and the warm regard of the Prison Reform Association of Louisiana. In a recent trip abroad, whither she went as delegate to the International W. C. T. U. Convention, she was heard at Edinburgh, the Lord Lieuten-

ant of Scotland being one of her auditors; later at Belfast, Ireland; next in Spurgeon's Tabernacle, London, and then at Paris, by audiences as attentive as those which have recently been her listeners in New York. As Mrs. Fry's hearers were confined to one continent it may be said that Mrs. Joseph, in point of territory covered by personal addresses, has somewhat the advantage of her great English prototype. In her own country she has visited twenty-two prisons in as many different States. Many of the reforms which Mrs. Fry sought for are now an integral part of prison discipline everywhere; others—as for instance, classification of prisoners according to age and degree of offence—Mrs. Joseph in common with philanthropists the world over is struggling to effect. Mrs. Joseph, explaining how she was drawn into her work for prisoners, said:—

'It has been nearly ten years since I began prison work. I felt called to it as ministers are called to the Gospel. The first impulse came one Saturday in passing the depot of the Mississippi Valley Railway, where the train stood all ready and coupled to start. Nearby an aged woman was sobbing bitterly. "Can I help you?" I asked. "No, my child," she answered, "my only son is in that gang going to the State Prison." I looked as she pointed, and saw twenty-four colored people boarding the train. I learned that nineteen out of the twenty-four were sent up for larceny. Think of this batch going up every thirty or forty days!

That night, as I knelt and begged God to comfort the aged mother whose son was locked behind prison walls, a voice seemed

whispering to me, "You must go to prisons and ask prisoners to pray that God will help them to resist temptation, and tell them never to do anything that will bring them back after they get out of their present trouble." She was frightened at the thought; it followed her up; she asked the Mayor's permission to visit the jails, and went in spite of the protests of her friends, who disapproved her course. On her first visit she went alone; none would accompany her. That day she shook hands with three murderers, talked and prayed with them. Two weeks later, she stood by one as the death sentence was read, and in another two weeks, went with him to the gallows, turning away just before he was launched into eternity, but not before he had thanked her for leading him to Christ. Through her efforts 2,000 men have pledged themselves to better lives; one of her converts is a minister of God. 'When people are friendless and in prison, they will listen,' she says: 'they have time to think. In nearly every church in New Orleans, I see some face that I have met in prison, some one with whom I have pleaded, some one whose pledge I have taken.' Securing judicial clemency in certain cases, effecting reconciliations between parents and wayward children, getting clothing for prisoners who had none, have all been part of her labors. She has bought material, taken it to jail, cut it into garments, and stood over idle women, and men, too, and taught them how to sew. Thus, the fashioning of raiment served a triple purpose in keeping prisoners occupied, imparting an industry, and providing the needy