

THE WORK OF THE AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION

(Continued from page 2)

school in operation since about 1838 and there was much religious activity of one kind and another among the Negroes in the village. Levi Coffin, the abolitionist, visited the place in 1844 and speaks well of the work that was being done by Isaac Rice:

"While at this place, we made our headquarters at Isaac J. Rice's missionary buildings where he had a large school for colored children. He had labored here, among the colored people, mostly fugitives, for six years. He was a devoted, self-denying worker, had received very little pecuniary help, and had suffered many privations. He was well situated in Ohio as pastor of a Presbyterian church and had fine prospects before him but believed that the Lord called him to this field of missionary labor among the fugitive slaves who came here by hundreds and by thousands, poor, destitute and ignorant, suffering from all the evil influences of slavery. We entered into deep sympathy with him in his labors, realizing the great need there was here for just such an institution as he had established. He had sheltered at this missionary home many hundreds of fugitives till other homes for them could be found. This was the great landing point, the principal terminus of the Underground Railroad of the west."

It was a heavy task that Isaac Rice faced at Amherstburg. Some idea of his difficulties may be gathered from a letter that he wrote to the Western Citizen, Chicago, in 1849. In this letter he says that for three months past he has been unable to do any mission work. He had no money to pay the freight charges on boxes of supplies sent for relief work. All the money he had received had been spent on the school and mission house. Clothing was needed badly by the destitute fugitives arriving daily. Over fifty had come in that summer and these and others had to be looked after. He asked that \$300 be supplied him to keep his work going. In the Liberator of August 23, 1850, there is a letter from Milly Morse, Foxboro, in which she appeals for help for Rice and his work. "He has suffered much in silence and given himself up for the good of the slave", says this letter. "He has lived principally on bread and beans and without the means to purchase these." The letter goes on to say that Rice has divided his own goods with the fugitives until he is actually suffering for want of proper clothing, that he has sold his watch and even his beds to get food, that he clothed 300 fugitives in one year, including a mother who arrived with her four children, and that of 20,000 Negroes in Canada, 3000 are near him in the southern part of the province. His mission buildings were reported completed at this time and with stoves had cost \$250. The first floor of the buildings was used for the school in which there were 90 pupils while the upper floor was used for receiving fugitives and looking after immediate needs.

Amherstburg continued through all the period of its activity in Canada the chief station of the American Missionary Association. It was a strategic point since more refugees entered by that gateway than by any other, as has already been pointed out, and the response to the effort of the missionaries seems to have been more marked here than elsewhere. The little village on the Detroit River must have been the scene of many dramatic incidents during those years when the runaway slaves were crossing into Canada. Some of these incidents have been recorded. Rev. W. M. Mitchell tells of a Negro named Hodgman who had been sold south from Kentucky but who escaped and made his way to Canada. While in slavery he had been separated from his wife and had lost all trace of her. Twelve years after he had escaped, the wife also managed to make her escape and crossed into Canada at Fort Malden, or Amherstburg. Friendless and lone-

ly she wandered about the streets of the village seeking shelter and was attracted by the singing in a Negro chapel. Opening the door she entered and the first person she saw was her husband from whom she had been so long separated and of whose whereabouts she had no knowledge.

It is very noticeable that education took a prominent place in the philanthropic work conducted for the benefit of the refugees at the various places where they were settled in any numbers. Hard as was the struggle for existence in the new land, where everything was so unlike what they had been accustomed to, the Negroes seemed keen to take advantage of any educational opportunity that was afforded them and where they did not have schools of their own they sought admittance to the regular schools provided by the municipalities. The Canadian law gave the Negro every right of the white man but practically there was often a distinction of color in education. Separate schools for the Negroes were established, among other places, at Chatham, Amherstburg and Windsor. There was a feeling among the white people in some places that there should be no choice as between public and separate schools. On the other hand there was a feeling amongst the Negroes that they should maintain their rights of entrance to the public schools. When Benj. Drew visited Amherstburg in 1854 he found the Negro separate school a small low building having neither blackboard nor chairs. Low rough benches were placed against the walls with desks before them. The whole interior was comfortable and repulsive. The teacher was a Negro woman, apparently doing the best she could under the discouragement of poor surroundings and frequent absences of her pupils. The situation was improved after this date, however, when the Colonial Church and School Society of England opened up a school. When Dr. Samuel G. Howe visited Amherstburg in the early sixties he found 90 colored children enrolled with an average attendance of 60. An educational movement among the Negroes themselves had its origin at Fort Malden in 1854 when the first "True Band" was formed. Similar societies afterwards existed in the other settlements. The True Bands were open to both sexes and a small monthly fee was charged. The aims of the Bands were to improve the schools, to increase school attendance, abate race prejudice, arbitrate disputes between members of the race, to assist the destitute, suppress begging and in all other ways possible work for the betterment of the refugees in Canada.

(To be continued)

THE WHATNOT COLUMN

Who was Samuel Coleridge-Taylor? Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, one of the greatest musicians the world has ever seen, was born in Holborn, England, August 15th, 1875. His father was a native of Sierra Leone, Africa, and his mother of English parentage. At the age of 5 years, Samuel showed genius, and rapidly rose to fame, many of his works composed when he was only 9 years old being used by world famous orchestras of today. As a choir boy, he so far excelled his companions as an oboist and violinist that he attracted the attention of England's most noted musicians. Capturing many scholarships, he graduated from the Royal College of Music, became an instructor in Croyden Conservatory, and was director of the Handel Society Orchestra. His most famous work "Hiawatha's Wedding Feast" is admittedly the "jewel of musical history." He died in 1912.

What are the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World?

The Pyramid of Cheops, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Gold and Ivory Statue of Zeus, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, the Mausoleum at Halicarnarus, the Colossus at Rhodes and the Pharos (lighthouse) at Alexandria, Egypt; all of which were largely constructed by Negro master mechanics and laborers.

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