

# African American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii:32.

VOL. LIX.

CHARLOTTE, N. C., THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1938

NO. 19.

## THE VALUE OF THE TEACHER TRAINING DEPARTMENT AT MARY HOLMES SEMINARY

By Miss Mary E. Foresman, Dean, Mary Holmes Seminary

(A paper read at the 24th Annual Workers' Conference, held at Johnson C. Smith University, March 7th to 11th.)

Mary Holmes Seminary and Junior College, in West Point, Mississippi, is one of the five schools which were originally boarding schools for Negro girls under the Presbyterian Board of National Missions. Like three of the others, it has enlarged its field of usefulness by becoming co-educational and opening its doors to day students. From less than one hundred students in 1933 the enrollment has grown to three hundred and thirty-seven in 1938, with three departments—teacher training, high school, and practice school of eight grades. It is of the teacher training department that I am to speak.

Assuming that the value of any unit of educational work lies in its organization to meet the needs of the constituency which it serves; and that the proof of its worth is found in the lives and service of the students which it trains, then I can best prove the worth of our teacher training department at Mary Holmes by giving you a word picture of the educational needs of the Negro people of Mississippi, and by telling both how we prepare our students to meet those needs, and what our graduates and former students are doing in their fields of service.

Mississippi is largely a rural State. Eighty-three and one tenth per cent of its population live in the country. Sixty-seven per cent of the people are engaged in agriculture. The educational problem is principally a rural problem. Also it is not a wealthy State. According to statistics in 1929 the per capita wealth was the lowest in the list of States—\$1,242. It is said to be much lower now. The social income of the people was the lowest in the country at that time, and there is no reason to suppose that it has changed.

Mississippi has the largest percentage of Negro population of any State in the Union. According to the 1930 census the population is made up of one million, nine thousand, seven hundred, eighteen Negroes, and nine hundred ninety-six thousand, eight hundred fifty-six whites. In 1930 there were 471,704 families of which 46.7 per cent were white, and 53.1 per cent were Negro. Only 31.8 per cent of the total were property owners. Sixty-six and one-tenth per cent were tenants. The proportion would be about the same now.

Of 22,125 rural homes in all parts of the State which were surveyed recently in a CWA project, 90 per cent were lacking in all the conveniences and comforts of life. One of the poorest homes that could be imagined was described as having beds made by sewing together grain sacks and throwing them over old rusty springs. There was filth everywhere, and the only food in the house was a bag of corn meal. Such an unsanitary and barren condition cannot be charged altogether to poverty. Ignorance plays a large part. For this home is on a plantation in the Delta, the richest farming land in the world. Mattresses could have been made from straw. Fruit and vegetables could have been canned. When asked how they would get food for the winter the woman of the house replied that they would get it at the store, and pay for it out of the next crop. It is quite probable that a vast number of rural homes, both white and colored, are without comfortable furnishings, pictures, books, magazines, or musical instruments.

Where poverty abounds health conditions are also poor. In 1933 infant mortality per one thousand live births was

63.4 per cent, and the maternal death rate was 6.8. In 1932 a little less than 50 per cent of births were attended by a physician. It costs a Negro baby 11.56 years of life to be born in Mississippi. During one year 20 per cent of all deaths each month were without medical attention. Many counties in Mississippi have but one dentist. Three have no dentists. Only twenty-four out of eighty-two counties have health departments.

In 1930 Mississippi ranked fourth from the bottom in illiteracy, the proportion being 2.9 among the white people, and 23.2 among the Negroes. The reason for the Negro people being so far behind is that prior to 1915 very little had been done in the way of public school education for Negroes. A few private schools like Mary Holmes, Tougaloo, Jackson College and others provided high school courses.

A State Bulletin says, "No cause for this condition can be assigned other than that the sentiment of the people had not been cultivated to the extent that Negro education even in a very elementary form was considered worth while." The general idea seems to have been that of the planter who said to the new teacher, a college graduate, "You can teach them readin', writin', and some figurin', but not much of that, and don't use any new-fangled ways of teachin'." Throughout the existence of the Division of Negro Education in the State Department of Education, established twenty-three years ago, the chief task has been to create sentiment among white leaders in favor of public support of Negro education not only of secondary but even of elementary level.

The first step in raising the standard of Negro education was taken in 1929 when a committee, with Dr. Newbold of North Carolina as chairman, made a partial survey of the State primarily to investigate the preparation of Negro teachers for their work and what teacher training facilities existed for the training of teachers. They found that fifty per cent of the teachers in the elementary schools had less than four years of high school training, and twenty-five per cent had never attended high school.

As to the number of high schools in the State at that time, there were sixteen public and sixteen private four-year high schools. One out of every 120 high school educables was in school. For training of teachers there was one State college, and that was not primarily a teachers' college. Counting fifty pupils to a teacher, 9769 teachers were needed, and only 5972 were employed. This condition remains the same.

I have pictured to you conditions as they were in 1929-1930; as they are also in many, many places in 1938. Last Summer several educators from Africa visited Mississippi to study Negro conditions in this country. After they had traveled over the State and visited schools and homes of all types and conditions, they said, "The Negroes of Uganda are in clover compared with Negroes in Mississippi." Does the picture seem overdrawn? I have quoted to you from the "Mississippi Educational Journal," from our State Agent of Negro Schools, and from interviews with Jeanes teachers, with our students, and other Negro people.

There is an encouraging and inspiring side to this problem. Progress has been made during the eight years since the survey. The Negro teachers are organized into county, district, and State teachers' associations. A few days ago one of

the district associations met on our campus for their annual meeting—a splendid group of teachers from eleven counties.

All school principals, meeting once a year, little by little have been trained to take positions of leadership in their communities. Last Fall I attended a most inspiring meeting where fifty earnest, enthusiastic young Jeanes teachers were commissioned to go out into fifty-four counties of Mississippi to lift their people out of the bondage of degradation and ignorance. In their work they were instructed to stress improvement of homes as much as improvement of schools. In this group of fifty were five who had received all or part of their training in two of our Presbyterian schools—Mary Holmes and Margaret Barber. One of these, now our local Jeanes teacher, said, "They are sending us out as missionaries." And that is the spirit of most of our teacher-training girls who go out to teach.

New school buildings have taken the place of some of the old tumble down shacks. In others steps have been built and windows put in. Money has been secured for equipment, teachers have gone to summer schools and summer schools have been reorganized to give teachers a chance to get continuous high school training. This Spring we along with other colleges have been asked to permit rural teachers as their schools close to come in for the Spring quarter.

Four four-year colleges and three two-year colleges of which Mary Holmes is one, have been accredited as teacher training institutions. Steps are being taken to have one college specialize in training rural teachers.

Eight four-year high schools, of which Mary Holmes is one, have been accredited, and ten are on probation. Three high schools and one college are in the Southern Association. Home demonstration agents in twenty-three counties work with the Jeanes teachers to improve homes, and where there are no demonstration agents the Jeanes teacher works to the same end. Their plan is to convert one home in each community into a model home.

Health conditions have improved. This last month (February) nurses were sent out by the State Department of Health to vaccinate all the school children of the State against small pox. One nurse who stayed with us told amusing stories of children in some schools running to the woods to hide, or going for their mothers to protect them. Most of the mothers were convinced that the nurse knew best. One mother who refused to have her children touched the first day came back the next with her husband and six children, saying, "I don't want them down on me to be nursed." In another district where the teacher had paved the way for the nurse by health instruction, all the people of the community, from babes in arms to people in their seventies, were waiting for the nurse when she arrived.

Midwives are now being trained by the State and county nurses. On one plantation a cabin has been built as a model room for expectant mothers. Fathers, mothers, and young girls come to see what preparation should be made for the comfort of the mother, and the assurance of a healthy baby.

One planter built a road two miles long, so that nurses could come to inoculate his tenants against typhoid fever. On a 3000 acre plantation the owner built a cabin as a clinic for a doctor, sent by the government from Howard University, and a nurse from the State Department of Health to test the 2500 Negro tenants for syphilis. Eighty-five per cent were affected by this terrible scourge. The owner provided the medicine, and the nurse stayed to administer it.

A five-year study for the improvement of instruction in all

the schools of the State is just being completed. From it a definite program for Negro schools has evolved. It calls for comfortable school houses, properly equipped with tables, desks, blackboards, stoves, and teaching materials. "In each school we want a good teacher of character, training, and personality, to teach the children how to read and to write, how to use numbers, how to use their hands in doing their work, and in earning a living; how to be clean and healthy, how to be truthful, honest, and courteous, and how to respect property." "In each county we want a good high school. Two counties could go together if sparsely settled. Agricultural or vocational high schools will best meet the need. These schools should emphasize above everything else health and economic efficiency."

With all these facts in mind of what value is teacher training at Mary Holmes? No school has ever had any greater opportunity to help in a worthy movement. We have this privilege not only of ourselves preparing boys and girls to become worthy citizens, but also of training teachers who will go into the towns, villages, and rural communities to teach children and parents how to live decently, comfortably, and more abundantly.

At Mary Holmes we use the curriculum planned by the State. We give the students content courses to broaden their knowledge of subjects they are to teach: psychology, that they may understand the child and the process of learning; methods in guiding the work of the children; industrial art that they may teach the hands to work to provide comforts and beautiful environment; nature study that they may teach the children to appreciate God's handiwork, and that they may better use the gift of song, and the Bible that they may learn from the Master Teacher.

They learn the principles of health that they may help their pupils to develop healthy bodies, and to fight disease in their communities. Where there are no nurses in the counties they must instruct the mothers how to have sanitary homes and healthy babies.

They make teaching materials to supplement and often to take the place of text-books. Reading charts of wrapping paper, maps on muslin, and numbers on milk bottle tops are inexpensive but effective means of presenting ideas.

Student teachers are told that their work includes helping the church in their community. Education Week in our State starts with a Sunday school rally. In the first year of our department Mr. Campbell suggested that we take charge of the Mission Sunday school as our religious project. Each year since our students have superintended the school, taught the classes, played the piano, and visited the children's homes. This year they organized a Christian Endeavor Society for the high school pupils who board or live in the neighborhood, and a Junior C. E. for the younger children.

This department was started in 1932. In six years we have sixteen graduates, including four who finish this year; twenty-three one year students, and twenty-five teachers who have come in for late afternoon, or Saturday classes, or for the Spring quarter. Sixty-four to represent us in this great mission field—the number seems small! But we have to remember the scarcity of four-year high schools from which to draw students. Twelve of the counties which are still without four-year high schools are in our northeastern quarter of Mississippi. Three of them border our county, and five more border these three. About one-fourth of our high school graduates return; the others who teach begin without special training.

We also have to remember

## WHITE RIVER PRESBYTERY

By Rev. Geo. E. Caesar, S. C.

White River Presbytery met in Allison chapel, Ninth and Gaines Sts., Little Rock, Ark., on Wednesday, April 13, 1938, and was opened by a sermon by the Moderator, Rev. T. B. Hargrave, on the words from Isaiah: "And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god."

Rev. G. E. Caesar, Stated Clerk of the Presbytery; Rev. L. A. Ellis, and Rev. William Sample, assisted in the service. The Presbytery was constituted with prayer. The roll was called. A quorum being found present, the Presbytery was ready for business, and went into the election of officers. Rev. L. W. Davis was unanimously elected Moderator, and Rev. C. N. Shropshire was unanimously elected Temporary Clerk. The docket was presented to the Presbytery and was adopted.

Rev. Chilton Christian, pastor of the First Congregational church, and Rev. G. G. Walker, pastor of St. Philip's Episcopal church, were introduced by Rev. G. E. Caesar, and were accorded seats as corresponding members. Those ministers made appropriate remarks, Rev. Christian bringing greetings from the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Little Rock. Rev. R. J. Christmas responded to their remarks. The Moderator announced the Standing Committees. The local committee made its report to the Presbytery through its chairman, Mr. E. D. Alexander. An offering was taken. After which, the Presbytery adjourned with prayer by the Moderator until 9 o'clock Thursday morning, April 14.

Thursday Morning, April 14  
The Presbytery reconvened on the above date, at 9 o'clock, the first half hour being given to devotional service, led by Rev. S. J. Grier. Prayer was offered by Rev. R. J. Christmas. The roll was called. The minutes of the previous session were read and were approved. The Stated Clerk presented the usual documents to the Presbytery, which were directed to be given to the Standing Committee on Bills and Overtures.

Reports on the Boards were called for. The reports were made through the chairmen of the committees on the Boards. After discussion, they were approved. The reports on churches and Sunday schools were made through their representatives. The reports were discussed at length, and showed numerical and financial gains in the majority of the churches and Sunday schools.

The report on the American Bible Society was presented through the committee chairman, Rev. N. B. Bynum, and was approved. The Presbytery took recess until 1:45 and was closed with prayer by the Moderator.

Thursday Afternoon  
The Presbytery was favored with an address on Evangelism by Rev. T. B. Hargrave. The address was inspiring. The Committee on Vacancy and Supply presented a report through its chairman, Rev. L. W. Davis. The report showed that all the churches in the Presbytery were supplied with the exception of two.

The commissioners to the last General Assembly were called on to present their reports. Rev. C. N. Shropshire, commissioner, gave a glowing report to the Presbytery, which showed that he had an eye single to the business of the General Assembly. Elder Ernest Polk, lay commissioner, was absent from the Presbytery; hence, did not report.

The Committee on Necrology conducted memorial services in memory of Rev. H. M. Stinson, D. D., who labored long and faithfully in the Presbytery,

and was called on December 10, 1937, from the church militant to the church triumphant. Committee was composed of Rev. R. J. Christmas, Rev. William Sample, and Elder L. H. Means.

Rev. L. W. Davis and Elder Moses A. Bailey were unanimously elected principal ministerial and principal lay commissioners to the next General Assembly, and Rev. G. E. Caesar and Elder Israel Harrison were unanimously elected alternates.

The Committee on Resolutions of Thanks presented a report through its chairman, Rev. William Sample. The report was approved.

The minutes of the previous session were read and approved.

The Presbytery took recess until 7:30 Thursday night, and was closed with prayer by the Moderator.

## Popular Meeting

The usual Popular meeting was conducted Thursday night at 7:30 o'clock, Rev. William Sample and Rev. L. A. Ellis, participating. The Woman's Presbyterial Society conducted its usual program, Mrs. C. N. Shropshire, President, presiding. The program was very interesting. The occasion was highly favored with music by Shorter College. The Rev. A. G. Gregg, President of the College, was present. There was an appreciative audience.

The members and friends of Allison chapel spared no pains in entertaining the Presbytery. And the Presbytery expressed to them, in glowing terms, its appreciation of their hospitality.

The Presbytery adjourned with prayer to meet in Gibson chapel, Springfield, Mo., the second Wednesday in April, 1939, D. V.

## McCLELLAND PRESBYTERY

By Rev. L. E. Ginn, Stated Clerk

McClelland Presbytery held its Spring meeting with Salem Presbyterian church at Anderson, S. C., opening Thursday, April 7th, at 7:30 P. M.

The opening sermon was preached by the Moderator, who used as his text Hebrews 12:1-2. The sermon, backed up by the Salem church choir, with its spiritual songs, made this a very impressive service indeed.

After this the Presbytery was constituted with prayer and went into the election of Moderator and Temporary Clerk. The Rev. B. H. McFadden was elected Moderator and Rev. H. Y. Kennedy was chosen as Temporary Clerk. The Moderator made a few remarks on receiving the gavel of authority concerning the ministers and churches cooperating with him in the great work that lay before him. The docket of business was then presented and read by the Stated Clerk.

Addresses of welcome were delivered on behalf of the churches of Anderson, by Rev. G. S. Sawyer, of the M. E. church; on behalf of the business people by Mr. W. I. Peek; and on behalf of the schools by Prof. S. C. Perry. The Moderator made choice of Rev. P. A. Flack to respond to these very cordial words of welcome, which he did in a pleasing and dignified manner.

Rev. J. H. Toatley, of Fairfield Presbytery; Rev. A. A. Thompson of Hodge Presbytery and Rev. G. S. Sawyer, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, were accorded seats as corresponding members of Presbytery.

The offering was taken, the doxology was sung and Presbytery closed with prayer to meet Friday morning at 9 o'clock.

Friday morning, April 8th, Presbytery met at 9 o'clock and was opened with prayer. The roll was called by the clerk. The minutes of our last stated meeting were read by the Stated Clerk as information.

Appointment of Temporary Committees by the Moderator was as follows: (1) Bills and Overtures, Rev. A. H. Reason-

(Continued on Page 4)

(Continued on Page 3)