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NORRIS WRIGHT CUNEY OF TEXAS

QUESTIONS ON THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

BOOK OF THE MONTH

A PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHER

"WHAT are you talking about?" inquired a white clerk at work forty years ago in the Chicago Post Office, after having heard a fellow worker, a native of the South, denounce the Negro as an undesirable.

"The people from your section," said he further, "are always making uncomplimentary remarks about the Negro. I have traveled through the entire South; and the outstanding achievement that I found in all that section was the work of a Negro—Tuskegee Institute."

A few years later, Mary Church Terrell happened to be in a conversation with a young Negro who took occasion to denounce Booker T. Washington in scathing terms because of his advocacy of practical education for the masses of Negroes. At the close of this youthful outburst Mrs. Terrell asked the young man:

"Have you ever seen Tuskegee Institute? Have you ever examined thoroughly what Booker T. Washington has built up there?"

"No," was the reply.

"Then," said she, "I shall not discuss Booker T. Washington with you because you do not know what you are talking about."

Not long thereafter the young man availed himself of the opportunity to visit Tuskegee Institute, and so startled was he at what he observed that he became an ardent admirer of the founder of Tuskegee.

A few years later this same young man happened to be in Frankfort-on-the-Main while traveling in Europe. A friendly stranger, seeing that he was having some difficulty with German, approached and assisted him as an interpreter to transact the difficult problem at hand. This stranger, moreover, invited the young Negro to his home, entertained him at dinner, and spent the afternoon showing him the attractions of that city. At the close of the day when the traveler went to the station to take a train for the next point, the new acquaintance said in taking leave of the Negro-American:

"You may wonder why I have been so much interested in you and why I have spent so much time with you today. The explanation is that some years ago when I was a bookseller in Copenhagen, I sold a translation of Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, and I enjoyed reading it more than I did selling the large number of copies that my customers required. I found it one of the most charming stories I have ever read. It gripped me so that I could not stop reading until I had finished it. When I saw you standing in the station I knew that you were one of his people, and I wanted to become acquainted with you and to help you in every way that I could. You belong to a people who have made much progress, and you have a great future which Booker T. Washington has helped to build."

A GIRL WHO BECAME A GREAT WOMAN

MANY years ago there lived in Macon, Georgia, a little girl named Lucy Laney. She was born a slave and while she was still a small child her father and mother moved to Savannah, where they worked for the Campbell family to whom they belonged. Her father, besides doing his daily work on the plantation, was the pastor of the Negro church. Lucy was one of a very large family—the seventh of ten children.

As a very small child Lucy showed an aptitude for reading and when she was four years old she was taught to read and write. Her mother was a maid in the Campbell home, and very often Lucy went with her mother. As Mrs. Laney busied herself with the housework little Lucy would climb into a big library chair and there all cuddled up and comfortable she would soon be lost in stories so charming to children. In this way she learned about people and places in other parts of the world. This love for reading remained with her all her life.

When she was fifteen years old she entered Atlanta University and was a member of the first class to graduate from this now famous school. There were four members in the class. The year was 1873. She had made a splendid record in her work.

Lucy Laney became a teacher in the public schools of Savannah, Georgia. Later when her health began to fail she moved to Augusta. When her health improved she decided to remain there and to open a private high school for Negro youth. At first she planned to take girls only, but when some poor, ragged but eager boys came she took them in also.

In the second year she had enrolled two hundred fifty pupils. However, she found it very hard to keep the school going as she had no money and very little help.

Finally being desperately in need of funds, she went to Philadelphia. Later on and as a result of this trip the Freedmen's Board gave \$10,000 for the school. It was named the Haines Normal and Industrial School after Mrs. F. E. H. Haines, a close friend of the founder.

There were not many good Negro teachers in those days, and Lucy Laney decided to prepare

better ones. Some of her graduates are now teachers, Y. W. C. A. workers, and others who are filling worthwhile positions, and all of them are splendid examples of the work done in this school.

Lucy Laney was a pioneer. A pioneer, as you know, is one who leads the way. A pioneer works at a time when the work is hard to do, but Lucy Laney had courage and faith in God. She died October 23, 1933. She is buried on the campus and now sleeps with her head pillowed on the soil of her beloved school. People remember her because she loved children and believed in them; because she had faith; because she lived simply and suffered much that others might have an opportunity.

The school still stands, and a great woman's dream still comes true.

H. V. FEGER



LUCY LANEY