

Charity Moore

Interview with Charity Moore, 75 years

— *W.W. Dixon, Winnsboro, S.C.*

One quarter of a mile north of Woodward station and one hundred yards east of US #21, is the beautiful residence of Mr. T.W. Brice. In the back yard is a two-room frame house. In this house lives Charity Moore and another aged Negro woman, said to be an octogenarian. They occupy the house together and exist on the goodness and charity of Mr. Brice. Charity was born a slave of Mr. Brice's father and has lived all her days in his immediate family.

"Don't you 'member my pa, Isaiah Moore? Course you does! He was de Uncle Remus of all de white chillun 'round dese parts. He sho' was! I seen him a settin' wid you, Marse Johnnie, Marse Boyce, and Dickie Brice, in de back yard many a time. You all was askin' him questions 'bout de tale he was a tellin' and him shakin' his sides a laughin'. He telled all them tales 'bout de fox and de rabbit, de squirrel, brer tarrapin, and sich lak, long befo' they come out in a book. He sho' did!

"My ma name Nancy, dat was pa's wedded wife. Dere was no bigamous nor concubine business goin' on wid us. My brothers was Dave, Solomon, Fortune, Charlie, and Brice. My sisters was Haley, Fannie, Sarah, Frances, Mary, and Margaret. Hold your writin' dere a minute. Dere was thirteen. O yes, I left out Teeta. Dat rounds them up, a baker's dozen, Marse Thomas use to 'low.

"White folks, my pa had Bible tales he never told de white chillun. Did you know dat my pa know de catechism from cover to cover, and from de back end to de startin' end? Concord Church gived him a Bible for answering every question in the catechism. Here 'tis. (Producing catechism published and dated 1840). My pa maybe never telled you any Bible tales he told de colored chillun. He 'low dat de fust man, Adam, was a black man. Eve was ginger cake color, wid long black hair down to her ankles. Dat Adam had just one worriment in de garden and dat was his kinky hair. Eve hate to see him sad, 'cause her love her husband as all wives ought to do, if they don't.

"Well, Adam play wid Eve's hair; run his fingers through it and sigh. Eve couldn't do dat wid his kinky hair. De debbil set up in de plum bushes and took notice of de trouble goin' on. Every day Eve's hair growed longer and longer. Adam git sadder and sadder. De debbil in de plum bushes git gladder and gladder. Dere come a day dat Adam 'scused hisself from promenadin' in 'mong de flower beds wid his arms 'round Eve, a holding up her hair. De debbil took de shape of a serpent, glided after Eve, and stole up and twisted hisself up into dat hair far enough to whisper in one of them pretty ears: 'Somebody's got something for to tell you, dat will make Adam glad and like hisself agin! Keep your ears open all day long.' Then de serpent distangled hisself, drapped to de ground, and skeedaddled to de red apple tree, close by de fountain. He knowed dat Eve was gwine dere to bathe. He beat her dere, 'cause she was walkin' sorta slow, grievin' 'bout Adam and thinkin' 'bout how to cheer him up. When she got dere, de

old debbil done changed from a snake to a angel of light, a male angel, I reckon. He took off his silk beaver hat, flourished his gold headed cane, and 'low: 'Good mornin'! Lovely day! What a beautiful apple, just in your reach too, ahem'! Eve say: 'I's not been introduced,' 'Well', said de debbil, 'My subjects call me Prince, 'cause I's de Prince of light. My given name is Lucifer. I's at your service, dear lady.' Eve 'flected: 'A prince, he'll be a king some day.' Then de debbil say: 'Of course, one of your beauty will one day be a queen. I seen a sadness on your lovely face as you come 'long. What might be your worry?' Eve told him and he 'low: 'Just git Adam to eat one bite out dat apple 'bove your head and in a night his hair will grow as long, be as black, and as straight as your'n.' She 'low: 'Us ain't 'lowed to eat of de fruit of de tree in de midst of de garden. Us dare not tech it, lest us die.' Then Satan stepped a distance dis way, then another way and come back and say: 'Gracious lady! Dis tree not in de midst of de garden. De one in de midst is dat crabapple tree over yonder. Of course de good Lord didn't want you to eat crabapples.' De debbil done got her all mixed up. De apple looked so good, she reached up, and quick as you can say 'Jack Robinson,' she bite de apple and run to Adam wid de rest of it and say: 'Husband eat quick and your hair will be as long, as black, and straight as mine, in de mornin'.' While he was eatin' it, and takin' de last swallow of de apple, he was 'minded of de disobedience and choked twice. Ever since then, a man have a 'Adam's Apple' to 'mind him of de sin of disobedience. Twasn't long befo' de Lord come alookin' for them. Adam got so scared his face turned white, right then, and next mornin' he was a white man wid long hair but worse off than when he was a nigger. Dere was more to dat tale but I disremember it now.

"I's livin' wid my young marster, Thomas, now. He took good care of my pa, when he got so old and feeble he couldn't work no more. God'll bless Marse Tommie for all his goodness. When Pa Isaiah come to die, Marse Tommie come every day. One day in leavin', he said in his gruff, kind way: 'Is dere anything I can do for you Uncle Isaiah?' Pa say: 'Take care of Charity.' 'I will,' say Marse Tommie. Then he 'low: 'Ain't dere something else?' 'Yes,' pa 'low, 'I want a white stone over de head of my grave.' 'What must I put on de stone,' asked Marse Tommie? 'Just my name and age,' said pa. 'Oh yes, dere ought to be something else,' says Marse Tommie. Pa shook his head. 'I want something else on it Uncle Isaiah,' said Marse Tommie. Wid a tear and a smile, pa raised his white head and said: 'You can put down, below de name and age, just dis: 'As good as ever fluttered.' And dat stone at Concord Cemetery 'tract more 'tention then any stone and epitaph in dat churchyard. Why, de white folks puts flowers on it sometimes.

"I wonder sometime in de winter nights, as de north wind blows 'bout de cracks in de house, if pa is warm and in Abraham's bosom. But I knows pa; he's 'umble. There's so many white folks in dat bosom he'll just be content to lie in Isaac's bosom or maybe de prophet Isaiah's, for who he was named.

"Wait dere! You have bad luck to leave by dat door. You comed in by dis door and you just leave by de same door. Some folks say nothin' to dat but I don't want you to risk dat. Glad you come. Good bye.