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PASTOR OF THE
Saratoga Street African Baptist Church,
BALTIMORE.

A
NARRATIVE
OF
THE LIFE
OF
REV. NOAH DAVIS,
A COLORED MAN.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF, AT THE AGE OF FIFTY-FOUR.

PRINTED SOLELY FOR THE AUTHOR'S BENEFIT.

Baltimore:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN F. WEISHAMPEL, JR.,
No. 484 West Baltimore St.

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* * I had now been in Baltimore more than a year. My wife and seven children were still in Virginia. I went to see them as often as my circumstances permitted—three or four times a year. About this time, my wife's mistress agreed to sell to me my wife and our two youngest children. The price fixed, was eight hundred dollars cash, and she gave me twelve months to raise the money. The sun rose bright in my sky that day; but before the year was out, my prospects were again in darkness. Now I had two great burdens upon my mind: one to attend properly to my missionary duty, the other to raise eight hundred dollars. During this time we succeeded in getting a better place for the Sabbath school, and there was a larger attendance upon my preaching, which demanded reading and study, and also visiting, and increased my daily labors. On the other hand, the year was running away, in which I had to raise eight hundred dollars. So that I found myself at times in a great strait.

My plan to raise the money was, to secure the amount, first, by pledges, before I collected any. * * Finally, the year was more than passed away, and I had upon my sub-

scription list about one half of the money needed. It was now considered that the children had increased in value one hundred dollars, and I was told that I could have them, by paying in cash six hundred dollars, and giving a bond, with good security, for three hundred more, payable in twelve months. I had six weeks, in which to consummate this matter. I felt deeply, that this was a time to pray the Lord to help me, and for this my wife's prayers were fervently offered with my own. I had left my wife in Virginia, and come to Baltimore, a distance of over a hundred miles; I had been separated thus for nearly three years; I had been trying to make arrangements to have her with me, for over twelve months, and as yet had failed. We were oppressed with the most gloomy forebodings, and could only kneel down together and pray for God's direction and help.

I was in Fredericksburg, and had but one day longer to stay, and spend with my wife. What could be done, must be done quickly. I went to my old friend, Mr. Wright, and stated my case to him. After hearing of all I had done, and the conditions I had to comply with, he told me that if I would raise the

six hundred dollars cash, he would endorse my bond for the remaining three hundred.— This promise inspired me with new life. The next thing was, how could the six hundred dollars be obtained in six weeks. I had upon my subscription list and in pledges nearly four hundred dollars. But this had to be collected from friends living in Fredericksburg, Washington city, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.

I left Fredericksburg, and spent a few days in Washington, to collect what I could of the money promised to me there; and met much encouragement, several friends doubling their subscriptions. When I arrived in Baltimore, and made known the peculiar strait I was in, to my joyful surprise, some of the friends who had pledged five dollars, gave me ten; and one dear friend who had promised me ten dollars, for this object, and who had previously contributed largely in the purchase of myself, now gave me fifty. I began to count up, and in two weeks from the time I commenced collecting, I had in hand four hundred dollars. Presently, another very dear friend enquired of me how I was getting along; and when I told him, he said, "Bring your money to me."

I did so. It lacked two hundred dollars to make the purchase. This, the best friend I ever had in the world, made up the six hundred dollars, and said, "Go, get your wife; and you can keep on collecting, and repay the two hundred dollars when you get able."

I was now overcome with gratitude and joy, and knew not what to say; and when I began to speak, he would not have any of my thanks. I went to my boarding house, and shut myself up in my room, where I might give vent to the gratitude of my heart: and, O, what a melting time I had! It was to me a day of thanksgiving.

Having now in hand the six hundred dollars, and the promise of Mr. Wright's security for three hundred more, I was, by twelve o'clock, next day in Fredericksburg.

At first sight, my wife was surprised that I had come back so soon; for it was only two weeks since I had left her; and when I informed her that I had come after her and the children, she could hardly believe me. In a few days, having duly arranged all things relative to the purchase and removal, we left for Baltimore, with feelings commingled with joy and sorrow—sorrow at parting with five

of our older children, and our many friends; and rejoicing in the prospect of remaining together permanently in the missionary field, where God had called me to labor. I arrived in Baltimore, with my wife and two little ones, November 5th, 1851, and stopped with sister Hester Ann Hughes, a worthy member of the M. E. Church, with whom I had been boarding for four years.

The Md. Baptist Union Association was now in session here, and it became my duty to prepare my church letter and missionary report, for that body. The church had now been organized just three years; commencing with only four members, including the pastor. Our church statistics for the year, as reported, were: Baptized, 2; Received by letter, 2; Present number of members, 15..... Sabbath school much revived, under the special efforts of several white brethren and sisters. Present number of Sunday scholars, 50.

This year was a joyful one to me—my little church increasing, and the Sabbath school flourishing, under the superintendence of the late truly excellent brother James C. Crane, though he was with us but for a short season. My wife and little ones were also with

me, both in the church and Sabbath school. I was a happy man, and felt more than ever inclined to give thanks to God, and serve Him to the best of my ability.

My salary was only three hundred dollars a year; but with hard exertion and close economy, together with my wife's taking in washing and going out at day's work, we were enabled by the first of the year, to pay the two hundred dollars our dear friend had loaned us, in raising the six hundred dollars before spoken of. But the bond for three hundred dollars was now due, and how must this be met? I studied out a plan; which was to get some gentleman who might want a little servant girl, to take my child, and advance me three hundred dollars for the purpose of paying my note, which was now due in Virginia. In this plan I succeeded; and had my own life insured for seven years for five hundred dollars, and made it over to this gentleman, as security; until I ultimately paid him the whole amount; though I was several years in paying it.

Among the number that joined our little church, was a young brother, Jos.M.Harden, who was baptized by Dr. Fuller, but soon