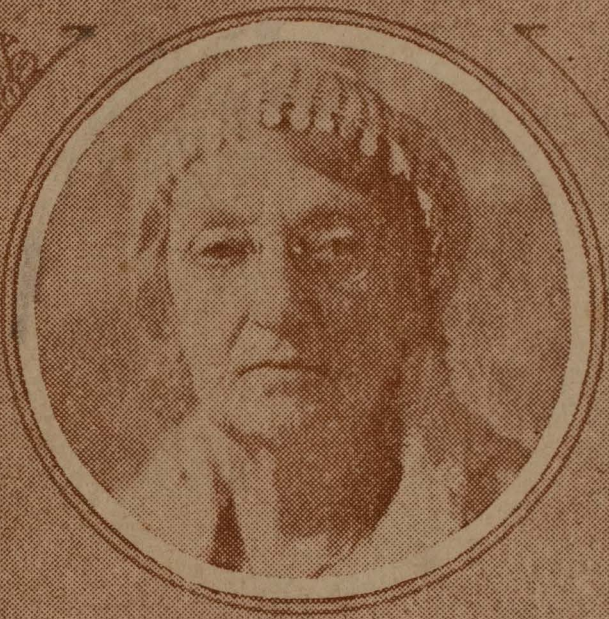


*Old "Miss" and "Mammy"*



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*Address delivered on Memorial  
Day, April 26<sup>th</sup> 1924, in First  
Presbyterian Church, Houston, Tex*

*By*

*Norman G. Kittrell*

*The entire proceeds of the sale of this  
booklet will go to the Home for Aged  
Ex-slaves at Houston, Texas.*

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Thomas H. Kirtland

## Dedication

TO THE AGED EX-SLAVES of the South who yet abide with us, and who, homeless and penniless, sit in the twilight of life, while on their ears falls the murmur of "the shadowy river which flows forever to the unknown sea," as a tribute to their fidelity to "Old Miss" and "Marster" and "dey chilluns," this modest booklet is dedicated.

# Old "Miss" and "Mammy"

Address delivered on Memorial Day, April 26, 1924, in  
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*Norman S. Kittrell*



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the Home for Aged Ex-slaves at Houston, Texas.

My Friends:

We have this afternoon drawn a little way apart from the highways of traffic, and shut out the cries of those who barter and sell in the marts of trade, to hold here, in this temple of the God of our fathers, for a brief season, communion with a past about which clings a host of tender, holy and immortal memories.

It was a past which was often marked by arduous trial and struggle, and shadowed sometimes by the clouds of sorrow and grief, but which was, nevertheless, lighted by lines of glory as unfading as the changeless pathway of the stars.

There lived then, and played their parts on the stage of human action, the highest type of manhood and womanhood the world has ever seen in any age or in any land.

Their canons of social duty, action and obligation were framed by no sordid or meretricious standard.

They measured the merit of no man either by the gold he possessed, or the garments in which he was clad.

Their code of manly honor and their ideal of womanly virtue found expression only in terms

unqualified and superlative; and if any man dared to impugn, or assail either, he did so at the peril of his life.

If they were, as envious tongues have said, "proud and haughty aristocrats," the aristocracy of which they were the exponents and exemplars, was not an aristocracy of money, but of blood, and breeding, and courage, and culture.

With them courtesy was a creed, and hospitality a religion, but the doors of their homes did not open to golden keys.

They stood, as those of their descendants who are faithful to their heritage still stand, in hereditary and perpetual rebellion against the social despotism of the dollar.

The only sesame, to the charm of which their doors responded and swung inward, was good breeding, moral worth and social fitness.

In their veins flowed the blood of generations of gentlemen and gentlewomen.

Their forbears scorned all that was mean and low.

They kept unfailing tryst with honor, and lived on lofty levels, and breathed that serene

ized every noble quality, which is essential to and pure atmosphere which perpetually vital-social virtue, and civic righteousness.

From the ranks of their ancestry came a line of soldiers, and statesmen and presidents.

They had given to mankind the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, the greatest and most important products of the human mind ever bequeathed the world, in all the records of the ages.

Of such mold, and character, and quality, and manner, were those who peopled that past to the memories of which we today pay tribute.

If we close our eyes, and summon tradition and memory to our aid, we can see the far-flung plantation, the stately Colonial mansion, embowered in the shade of the wide spreading oak and magnolia and sycamore, and can hear again that matchless music which proclaimed the Southern mocking bird, the monarch minstrel of the realm of song.

We seem to catch the fragrance of the jessamine and honeysuckle, and there seems to float upon the air the notes of the fiddle and the tambourine, and the banjo and the bones, as the

darkies play and sing in the shade, 'neath which stood the plantation "quarters."

Over the scenes which I have hastily, and I fear, crudely pictured, there brooded the spirit of the "Old Regime," which spirit, as I have taken occasion before to say, "lives yet, thank God."

War has not conquered it.

Poverty and hardship have not crushed it out.

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune have not weakened its power.

It lives within and above.

It is the priceless heritage handed down from generation unto generation, from sire to son, and from dame to daughter, through a line of knightly men and glorious women.

Against the radiant horizon of the South's glorious past are silhouetted two figures, for which there are no counterparts in history or tradition; "Old Miss" and "Mammy."

They move in memory across once peaceful and happy scenes, and though in a social sense widely separated by reason of difference in race and color, yet their lives were blended in

a companionship of affection, confidence, trust and service.

"Old Miss" stood as the type and example of her race, lineage and sex, for which there was no precedent or parallel in the social history of any people.

She was the embodiment of good breeding, kindness, culture, gentleness and grace.

She was at ease alike amid the environment of her own home, and amid those scenes where the requirements of the code of social conduct were most rigid.

Hers was always "ye olden time" stately, but gracious courtesy.

She moved in every circle with the consciousness that she would meet no superior, but free from the haughtiness and assumption of superiority by which the nouveau riche unfailingly betray their plebeian origin; she was gracious alike to host and guest.

In the walks of daily life and neighborly service, she was kind and considerate and hospitable to all alike, whether they were clad in silk or serge.

In her sphere of control she was supreme and ruled with firmness, yet she was gentle, but

with her gentleness there was so blended strength, and courage and fortitude, that when her sons were summoned to battle, she girded on their armor with her own hands, and with their lips warm with her kisses, and their cheeks wet with her tears, bade them go, and return with honor unstained; or not at all.

While they marched and fought and suffered, she toiled and watched and prayed, and, despite her aching, anxious heart, smiled through her tears, and when the grim reaper of the battle field took her beloved, she bowed without murmuring, to the fate of war, and if she had yet another son, sent him to take the place of his brother who had fallen at the post of duty.

When her sons came back, gaunt and ragged, and "broken and seamed with many a scar," she was the Southern mother still, and the tattered jacket of gray was in her eyes worthier and holier than would have been the proudest decoration bestowed by earthly monarch.

Many an "Old Miss" waited for her boy, who never came back, and even yet, here and there in this Southland, there can be found mothers who listen still for a footstep that will be heard no more, and "yearn for the touch of a vanished hand and for a voice that forever is still."

When all was lost save honor, she endured hardships, poverty and suffering with such heroic fortitude, that she made the days of peace more glorious, if possible, than were those of war.

When want kept watch beside her hearthstone, and sorrow brooded over her soul, and the wail of bruised hearts rose above the din of human habitation 'round about her, and the moan of many a Rachel for her first born smote upon the air, "Old Miss" with serene and lofty courage met every trial and sorrow, and was faithful to her native land, to the memory of the just and righteous cause which her sons had glorified by their valor, and to the God in whom she trusted.

To draw her true picture, to portray her as she was in all her infinite and indefinable charm would beggar the rich vocabulary of our mother tongue, and the attempt would be but the prelude to inevitable failure.

Her record of kindy thoughts and gracious deeds; of gentleness and tenderness; of pure living and worthy example; and of service, suffering and sacrifice, can not be worthily perpetuated in the transient chronicles of human his-



tory. There is but one place where it can be worthily graven; and that is, in God's record book of eternal memories.

There was one in whose eyes "Old Miss" was the apotheosis of every virtue, and who will herself stand alone in the isolation of her unapproachable uniqueness through all the changing years, "Black Mammy."

What that homely and familiar phrase means, countless thousands can bear witness; and how hearts are stirred, and how the fountain of tears, touched by memory's magic wand, sends forth its tribute of grateful love, there is many a witness to testify who looks toward the past with tear-dimmed eyes.

No character in all the social or domestic realm of any land, or any age, of which there is preserved the memory in history or tradition, filled her place, or would serve as a standard whereby to measure the value of her simple and unselfish service, or the duration of her influence.

She was essentially *sui generis*.

The past furnished no precedent, the present has no parallel.

Wholly unlearned, without even the rudiments of education, holding with unshakable

belief to all manner of superstition, filled with terror and direful foreboding if the "squinch" owl was heard even once at twilight; stopping to break, by some rude incantation, the "spell," if the "Molly Cottontail" crossed the road ahead of her; believing in "hants" and "sperrits" and "ghostes" even as she believed in her own identity; with hellfire and brimstone as essential ingredients of her religious belief—she yet was the truest, most faithful, most trustful, most devoted creature that ever served with simple faith and love sincere in the sphere "in which it had pleased God to place her." folks!"

How tender, how constant, was her love for her white "chilluns!"

How lordly, how sovereign, her contempt for all those who, according to her ideals, were not "quality folks!"

She was the aristocrat of aristocrats, the patrician of patricians.

No standard was so high as hers, no test of "quality" and blood so inexorably rigid.

She was the self-appointed, and watchful guardian of the dignity, pride and honor of the "fambly."

"Whatever concerned her "white folks" concerned her.

If she belonged to them, they in a different—but in her sight no less real—sense belonged to her, and she was ever ready to defend with the zeal of a fanatic the faith to which she held, that they were "the qualityest people that ever wuz," and that to compare with them any who measured not up to her standard, was profanation unpardonable.

Her faith in God was the simple, trusting faith of childhood, unclouded by doubt, undisturbed by mysticism or metaphysical refinement, which had no place in the narrow field of her mental operations.

The rude, crude prayers framed by her unlearned lips were lifted to the heaven in which she believed, with unquestioning faith that they would be heard, and answered by a merciful Father who ruled and reigned there.

Many a man and woman whom the world acclaims "great," knelt at "Black Mammy's" knees to say his or her evening prayer, and was soothed to sleep in the twilight hour in her big, black arms by the crooning of her lullaby songs, and, no matter how many years have passed,

or how far they have wandered, in her eyes they are yet her "chilluns."

Some day there will be reared somewhere on Southern soil a memorial as worthy of her as is within the power of artistic skill; but no genius can conceive, nor constructive effort fashion shaft, or column, or monument, which will worthily symbolize her patience, and love, and fidelity. Her memory will outlive granite and marble and bronze. Though her skin was black, her soul was white, and in that land where God giveth his beloved rest, the voice which hummed and crooned soft and tender lullabies here, will there blend with the voice of "Old Miss" in the rapturous melody of "the everlasting song."



