

FREED SLAVE TELLS OF 'SALE' BY BEECHER

'Pinky' Visits Plymouth Church Where She Was Auctioned and Released in 1860.

RECALLS FAMOUS PREACHER

Speaks From Pulpit at Celebration of 80th Anniversary—Voices Gratitude to Congregation.

"Pinky," who sixty-seven years ago, as a little slave girl, was "auctioned off" for \$900 by Henry Ward Beecher and then set free in the pulpit of Plymouth Congregational Church, Orange Street, Brooklyn, came back yesterday as Mrs. James Hunt, 76 years old, wife of a negro lawyer in Washington, D. C., and was the central figure at the eightieth anniversary of Mr. Beecher's first sermon in that historic church.

The Rev. Dr. J. Stanley Durkee, the pastor, and formerly President of Howard University for Negroes in Washington, who a year ago "discovered" Mrs. Hunt, delivered reminiscent sermons both morning and evening extolling Mr. Beecher. On the calendar for the day was a facsimile of the bill of sale of "Pinky," in which the name is given as "Pink."

Last evening Mrs. Hunt sat in the pulpit in the same chair in which she had cuddled up when Mr. Beecher, imitating a professional auctioneer of slaves in the South, had offered her to the highest bidder, taken up a collection and, lifting from the collection basket a valuable ring which had been placed there by Rose Terry, the author, had placed it on the finger of the little girl, exclaiming, "Remember, with this ring I do wed thee to freedom."

She Tells of Incident.

When Dr. Durkee presented her the 3,000 persons who packed the church rose and sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Mrs. Hunt in a trembling voice, and with the utmost simplicity, told of what her liberator had done.

The one-time slave, now an educated woman, stood behind a great bank of flowers given by Harold Anderson in memory of his mother.

"Pastor, members and friends of Plymouth Church, it is with deep emotion that I greet you and congratulate you upon this your eightieth anniversary," said Mrs. Hunt.

"I feel it a great privilege to be with you today, to join you in your celebration and especially to extol the memory of one whose name always seems to me to be the complement of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn—the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. There can be but a few of us present who will be able to recall Mr. Beecher as he stood upon this rostrum sixty-seven years ago. My own recollection of this time is very meager, only one incident standing out in my childish mind. My hair was combed back from my face and held in place with a long, curved rubber comb, such as children wore at that time. Evidently Mr. Beecher had not noticed this before I was put upon the platform, but when he did see it, he came quietly to me, removed the comb and said, 'Never wear anything in your hair except what God put there.'

"The other memorable events seemed not to have impressed me very much, and I am sure that the picture which I now hold of them is the result of repeatedly being told the story.

"As the years went by, however, I came to a full realization of the Christ-like work of Mr. Beecher and his associates, Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Faulkner brothers and others. What great love, what great compassion for their unfortunate fellow-men, redeeming their bodies as Another had long before redeemed their souls. And in this they followed that great example, inasmuch as they did not defy the law. Such an attitude toward this insidious foe of the nation was the leaven which led to the manumission of thousands, black and white.

Deep Love and Gratitude.

"I am glad of this opportunity to publicly acknowledge that I have always had a feeling of deep love and gratitude toward this church, whose congregation did so much for me.

"Thanking you for making it possible for me to be with you today, I wish for you godspeed forever and ever in Plymouth Church."

After the benediction more than 1,000 men and women filed by Mrs. Hunt and said affectionate words of greeting. Two large bouquets of American Beauty roses were given to her.

Two white-haired women approached her as she was leaving the church and told her they had been present when she was "auctioned off" and remembered the scene vividly.

Sits in Beecher Pew.

At the morning service, at which the big church was filled, Mrs. Hunt sat quietly in the Beecher pew, the third from the pulpit on the middle aisle, and just behind the Lincoln pew, where Abraham Lincoln used to sit. On one side of Mrs. Hunt was her only child, Miss Eva Hunt, who accompanied her mother up from the capital, and on the other side sat Miss Beatrice Bernice Beecher, of Manhattan, a granddaughter of Henry Ward Beecher and daughter of the late Herbert Foote Beecher, the youngest son of the famous preacher. During the closing hymn Mrs. Hunt was led out of the side door of the church by Miss Beecher, the young woman with her arm around the older woman, and accompanied by the daughter.

After most of the worshippers had left, Miss Beecher took Mrs. Hunt into the garden, where the aged woman stood by the statue of Beecher and was snapped by newspaper photographers.

Later Miss Beecher steered Mrs. Hunt through a throng of admiring onlookers and took her to the pastoral reception room of Plymouth Institute, where "Pinky" answered rapid-fire questions put by reporters.

Dr. Hillis Sends Regrets.

At the morning service Dr. Durkee read a letter from the Rev. Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis, his predecessor as pastor of the church, regretting he could not be present.

The Gloria Trumpeters played and led the congregational singing. One hymn sung was "Love Divine, All Love Excelling," which was written in honor of Mr. Beecher. The closing hymn was "My Days Are Gilding Swiftly By," a favorite of the Abolitionist.

Prayer was offered by the Rev. Dr. Arthur Henderson Smith, who has served as a missionary in India for fifty-three years.

In his morning sermon Dr. Durkee said he was so proud to be a successor of Henry Ward Beecher that often on entering the pulpit he felt like kissing the lectern. He called Beecher the greatest preacher America had produced. Dr. Durkee deplored the fact that there had lately been issued a synical book about Mr. Beecher.

Text of Bill of Sale.

Following is the text of the bill of sale of "Pinky":

I, John C. Cook, of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, in



Photo by Scurlock Studio.

MRS. ROSE WARD HUNT, Who Revisited the Church Where She Was Once Freed as a Slave.

consideration of the sum of nine hundred dollars, paid me, by John Falkner Blake, resident of Alexandria, in the State of Virginia, do hereby bargain and sell to the said John Falkner Blake my mulatto slave, Sally Maria Diggs, commonly called "Pink," aged nine years—for the full term of her natural life—the said mulatto girl being a slave for life, and I warrant the title to said slave against the claim or claims of all and every person and persons, whatsoever.

Witness our hands and seals this eighth day of February in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty (1860).

J. C. COOK (Seal),
JOHN FALKNER BLAKE (Seal).

Sealed and delivered in presence of us, "C" being first initial.

CHARLES NAYLOR,
F. S. MYER.

City and County of Washington, District of Columbia, ss.:

This eighth day of February A. D., 1860, before me a justice of the peace in and for said City, County and District came the above named John C. Cook and John Falkner Blake and acknowledged the above bill of sale to be their act and deed and desired the same might be recorded as such. Witness my hand and seal the day and year aforesaid.

F. S. MYER, J. P. (Seal).

It was explained yesterday that the slave child had been called "Pink" because she had such red cheeks.