

Susie King Taylor's Memoir

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What we know about Susie King Tylor is mostly from her memoir titled "Reminiscences of My Life in Camp" Susan Ann Baker, also known as Susie King Tylor, was born in slavery on 6th August 1848. She was the first black army nurse and the first African-American woman who had published her wartime experiences. She served the regiment in which her husband served for four years during the Civil War. During the Civil War, she worked as a nurse, although she did not go to any school to learn to nurse. She was one of the few African Americans who knew how to read and write. She was the first woman who taught former slaves openly. She used to teach children in the morning and adults at night. Susie King Taylor also served as president of the Women Relief Corps in 1893. She gave assistance to soldiers and hospitals. She also provided support in the Spanish-American war.

The memoir by Susie King Taylor was both rare and special as she was the first person who wrote about her wartime experience. Her focus was on military life, where she served as a nurse during the Civil War in America. She shared her own experience as well as her husband's, who was a military person. The unique thing in her book was that she described in detail various battles and complimented them with the stories of her own personal experiences in the South. The beautiful selection of words for expressing her feelings at that time was aesthetic. She wrote about how she used to make herself warm in the difficult conditions during wartime (Tylor, 28). She shared in detail the glorious day when public reading of the emancipation proclamation was read. Her memoir was written meticulously, even though it was written many years after the Civil War. These were the things which made her stories rare and special.

Susie King Tylor was born in slavery. At that time, the conditions of African Americans in the USA were abject and horrific. They were denied basic human rights. The African Americans were not allowed to work on their own, they had no right of having a family and getting the education. These were the circumstances which gave Susie King Tylor an opportunity to achieve a name in history as a teacher. Due to her abilities of reading and writing, she was able to impress the commanding officers, who offered her a position to run a school for children and adults. The Civil War in America in 1861 was a fight between the northern and southern states of America. During the Civil War, she served as a nurse and laundress, which allowed her to gain experience regarding the war, and she was able to write them in her memoir.

Susie Ann Tylor was a philanthropist who worked for the betterment of African Americans before the Civil War. Her abilities gave her an opportunity to teach the black slaves in a school. She made her efforts because she wanted to make African American educated so that they could live a good life. Her work as a nurse was important for her because she was generous and kindhearted. In her memoir, there were various events where she expressed her happiness and satisfaction because of the goals she achieved. She wrote that she taught many comrades to read and write because they

were eager to learn, and she was very happy with her services (Tylor, 21). She had served in the military for four years without getting paid. This shows that her services in the military were not for money and she was doing it because she had a kind heart. Looking at the history, it can be said that she was able to achieve her goals.

After the end of the Civil War, she established a school for freed African American children, but later, she was forced to close her school. In 1870, she travelled to Boston as a domestic servant. She wrote her memoir in the 1890s. This was the time when she was looking after her dying son. Her memoir was published privately in 1902. It can be said that she wrote her memoir years after the end of the Civil War as she was busy teaching and operating her school. Susie King Tylor wrote her memoir to let the world know about the sufferings of African Americans before, during and after the Civil War. She was a slave, and with her efforts and capabilities, she was able to achieve a name in the world.

She described in detail the hardships she faced after the Civil War when her son was dying. She in her memoir, wrote how she was forced to ride a car which was meant for coloured people and how she was not able to get a sleeper berth because of her race (Tylor, 71). Her memoir also gave a message of female firmness. Her strong bonds with her grandmother and the way she began her memoir by referring to her grandmother was a symbol of feminism. She explained how her grandmother had motivated her to join the clandestine school for blacks, where she learned to read and write (Taylor). I believe that Susie Ann Tylor was a person born as a slave who had the ability to make a difference in the world. Her work as a nurse and a teacher helped many in changing their lives.

Works Cited

Taylor, Susie King. *Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33d United States Colored Troops: Late 1st SC Volunteers*. The author, 1902.