The Coming of the Katy to the Choctaw Nation.

The following reminiscences were written by Reverend Dr. J. S. Morrow, Baptist Missionary, who first came to Indian Territory in 1857, and are copied from an old scrapbook.

"When I first came to this Territory if anyone had told me that I would live long enough to see a railroad built through this country, my reply would have been, "If the good Lord will let me live as long as Methuselah that might be the case." Well, I am not yet as old as Methuselah, and yet I see many railroads and big cities and towns and the country full of white people with comparatively few Indians.

"In 1870 it was the common talk among the Indians that two railroads were being built down from Missouri, and which ever one should strike the Indian Territory line first, would build its road through the Territory and into Texas. The Indians did not like this. They
were very much afraid of the coming of the white people as indeed they had great cause to be.

"The 'coming of the railroad' was the subject of conversation at many of their gatherings. I remember hearing one old full-blood haranguing a crowd of his people on this subject once. He made a forcible talk, bringing out many good reasons to prove that the railroad would be a detriment. Finally, he wound up with the following clincher.

"I have ridden on those railroads east of the Mississippi. They have little houses on wheels - whole strings of them. One string can carry several hundred people. Those little houses can be shut up and the doors locked. If we allow that railroad to come, the white man will give a picnic some time by the side of their iron road and will invite all the full-bloods to attend. They get will/the men to play ball, off a piece. Then they will get our women to go into the little houses on wheels and will lock them up and run off with them into Texas or Missouri. Then what will we do for women?"
"But the railroad came just the same. I well remember when it reached Atoka in July, 1872. Mr. J. D. Davis and Mrs. E. A. Flack owned all the land about the place. The officers of the road wanted to build a depot at Atoka. They wanted double the land allowed them by law for their side-tracks. They accordingly asked Mr. Davis and Mrs. Flack to meet them in conference concerning the matter. Mrs. Flack was a fine old Indian woman. When Messrs. Stevens, Soul in and the chief engineer, Maj. O. B. Gunn, made known their wishes, Mrs. Flack asked many questions, all of which were satisfactorily answered. Finally she said: 'You will build us a nice depot house out of lumber?' 'Yes ma'am' they replied. 'You will paint it white?' she asked. 'Well, we do not know about that, we do not usually paint our depots white,' was the response to which she replied. 'Oh, you must paint it white; my husband was a white man and I like white houses.'

"The road brought many blessings. We missionaries could afford to buy two or three calico dresses for our good wives, where we could afford but one each year before."
"The railroad brought many evils also - a class of tramps and adventurers came with and after the road was built, that for several years constituted a demoralizing element.

"Just as the full-blood Indians predicted, the coming of the railroad opened up to the whites a knowledge of the wonderful resources of their country and was soon followed by the demand to 'remove the restrictions'. This demand has grown more persistent and imperious each year since and now, "Poor Lo" has in many instances nothing before him in this world but pauperism and the grave.

"I well remember many interesting incidents connected with the coming of the railroad. In 1872 or '73 the management of the railroad gave a free excursion to the Choctaws. A great train load of them were taken from Caddo, Atoka, McAlester and other points, to Parsons, Kansas, and to Sedalia and Boonville, Mo. Those cities welcomed the excursionists and made them very happy. Speeches were made by several of the Indian men."
At Boonerille, Mr. Forbes LeFlore, a prominent man in the public affairs of the Choctaw Nation, made a great hit and was loudly applauded. He said that the white people wanted the Indian's land when the whites already had more land than they were using. He then commented on the fact that the white people regarded the Indian as uncivilized and superstitious, yet when he was in a bank in Sedalia, Mo., that very day, he had noticed a horseshoe nailed up over the door. He had inquired what it meant and the banker had told him that it was 'to bring good luck and keep the witches off.'

"At first the railroad charged seven cents per mile, passenger fare, but this was later reduced to five cents per mile; after statehood it was reduced to three cents per mile.

"Some of the early conductors were very unaccommodating. I was once put off six miles south of Perryville and had to walk that distance up the track under a broiling summer sun, although I begged to be allowed to pay sixty cents more and get off at Perryville. But most of the conductors were nice men, such as W. H. Maxwell,"
John Hill, Chick Warner, Ben Brown and others."

The facts in this manuscript were established
by interviews with Mrs. R. J. Inge, Atoka, Mrs. Florence
Gregg, Durant, and Ed Flint, Choctaw freedman, Atoka.