

THE ESTERO MESSIAH

Carries the "Keys of Heaven" for a
Watch Charm.

LEE COUNTY'S KORESHANITES

Facts from a Chicago Man Who Has
Been a Resident of the "New
Jerusalem" for a Year.

From The Fort Myers, Fla., News.

Our reporter met last Sunday Samuel A. Thatcher, a gentleman who has been living with the Koreshan people at Estero for a year past. He was en route to Vera Cruz, Mexico, going via Punta Gorda and the Morgan line to Havana, at which place he will visit his daughter and erect a carriage house for his grandchildren. Mr. Thatcher came here from Chicago, not as a member of the Koreshan unity, but because his wife is a convert to Teed's doctrine, and it was to be with her that he came to Florida, having been promised all the liberties that one could enjoy elsewhere.

After a year's residence with these people, he seems disgusted with the peculiar teachings of the self-appointed Messiah, Dr. Teed. He has not a word to say against the people in the society from a moral standpoint, and even asserts that in his opinion Dr. Teed strictly lives a celibate life. The restrictions placed upon him in a social way were very obnoxious to him, and he says would have been to any man who loved social liberty. Families are practically separated by the laws laid down by the "Master." For instance, at this "New Jerusalem" are families composed of husband, wife and children, who are scarcely permitted to see each other, a portion of the family living on Estero island, while other members make their home on the mainland. The children are taught to look up to the "Master" and the "motherhood of God" (this being Mrs. Ordway), and are not allowed to show any natural love for their parents.

Forty-Four Spirits Incarnate.

Dr. Teed formed this new order about ten years ago, although he claims to have been "inspired" twenty-five years ago, and that no less than forty-four spirits of departed ones are reincarnated in him, including those of the Messiah, Moses, St. Peter (Mr. Thatcher asserts that Teed wears two keys as watch charms that he says are the keys of heaven), and Napoleon, although what relation the great French general can have to the meek and loving Messiah is a mystery. Perhaps, though, this "spirit of Napoleon" accounts for Teed's wonderful desire for power.

Asked how Dr. Teed succeeded in making converts to his strange doctrine, Mr. Thatcher replied that the women were hypnotized or mesmerized and seemed to be under the influence of the doctor. The men were drawn to the society through their desire to secure a home on the communistic idea, which is one of the features of the order. There are some intelligent men among them, but a great number appear to be men of weak minds. In fact, our informant asserts that Teed does not want anyone to belong to the unity who has any opinion of his own. As soon as it is discovered that a person displays a disposition to think for himself and has a mind of his own, he is given gentle hints that his room is more desirable than his company. Some of the men have great faith in the doctor and call him "Master," and this class base all their hopes for their future welfare in the strong faith that they have in the man.

Teed claims to be "Cyrus, the son of Jesse." This is true to the extent that

his father, who is still living at the age of 86, is named Jesse Teed, and that he named his son Cyrus Teed, although it is thought that he was christened John. Dr. Teed's father does not believe in Koreshanity, and takes no stock in his son's professions.

The Founder a Hustler.

Dr. Teed is what is commonly known as a hustler and a boomer. He was cut out for a land agent and seemed to have missed his calling in the role of the Messiah. If he could continue his efforts in building up his "New Jerusalem" of 8,000,000 souls at Estero to legitimate ways, none could find fault. We know there are some in Lee county who are very friendly to him, believing that he is doing no harm, and is assisting in settling our county. Dr. Teed, in his lectures in the north and his teachings to his people, claims that he will control Lee county in politics, but we see little danger in these threats, for while we believe that he is sincere in his desire to do this, the power will never be his. What we object to in the man is that we believe he is doing our county and Florida a great deal of harm for the reason that he is leading many to come to Estero on account of the flattering prospects that he is holding out to new settlers, picturing the location of the colony as a veritable paradise, when the fact is that the particular location of these people on the mainland is an unusually poor piece of land, so poor that crops will not grow thereon unless heavily fertilized. Mr. Thatcher asserts that the colony of sixty have not raised enough vegetables for their own table use and that they are living on mush, sweet potatoes and smoked mullet, never having fresh meat, unless occasionally a little game is brought in. There are few home comforts, most of them living in palmetto shacks. He says that the women and old men do not complain, but that the young men are dissatisfied with the fare that they are served with.

A Singular Character.

Not all of the people that Dr. Teed is bringing down from the north are converts to Koreshanity. Some are induced to come through the glowing descriptions given by Dr. Teed, and these on arriving there, and learning the true state of things, become dissatisfied and leave the country, with the result that Lee county is unjustly given a bad name.

A good deal of nonsense has been written about running Teed out of the county, etc. Of course there is little or no foundation for such talk. But the question is this: Can the people of this county encourage such methods as are being adopted by Dr. Teed in bringing settlers to our county? It is said that Teed gloated over the railroad strikes that centered in Chicago a year ago, and loves to tell of the bloody revolution that is to come in the United States, compared to which the reign of terror in France will have been a mild affair. He is a man who delights in defaming the Christian church and Christian ministers, and displays his intolerance of the laws of the land. Certainly these are not the sentiments that the people of Lee county will sanction or endorse.

All the information given above—and much more not referred to—is furnished us by Mr. Thatcher, who expects to return here in a few months, and remain in Fort Myers a short time, and he says that he is prepared to substantiate every statement that he makes. He appears to be an intelligent and refined gentleman. He was in the employ of a large insurance company at Chicago as bookkeeper prior to coming to Florida.