

NEGRO MILLIONAIRE'S KIN TO FIGHT FOR HIS ESTATE

Relatives of Col. John McKee, Cut Off with Small Annuities, Will Use Every Effort to Keep His Wealth from the Catholic Church.



COL. JOHN MCKEE

That the relatives of Colonel John McKee, the aged colored millionaire, who bequeathed the bulk of his \$2,500,000 to charitable uses, knew of the contents of his will prior to its reading on Thursday was proved yesterday, when it was learned that on Tuesday last, or two days before the will was read, a caveat

McKee was taken ill and was nursed by two Catholic sisters. From that time on, while still paying his pew rent at the Presbyterian Church in his neighborhood, he is reported to have evinced a preference for the Catholic faith to members of that church with whom he associated.

It is not known, either to members of the family or the colonel's friends, that any priest of the Roman Catholic faith ever visited him, nor have any papers been found among his effects showing that he had ever joined that church. The rector of the Church of St. Peter Claver, at Twelfth and Lombard Streets, in the immediate neighborhood of Colonel McKee's home, last night, denied instantly and emphatically that Mr. McKee had had any connection there.

Even Joseph P. McCullen, his lawyer, seems to be at sea on this point. The morning of the second day after the colonel's death he advised Attorney Minton that there was a clause in the will providing for burial from the Cathedral. Mr. Minton at once called on Mr. McCullen to say that the relatives knew nothing of this, and to ask if so strange a provision was explained in the testator's papers.

"I have found nothing as yet to show Colonel McKee a member of the Roman Catholic Church," said Mr. McCullen, "but I will notify you if I do."

The body, however, has not been interred, but is resting in a vault at Oliver Cemetery. Colonel McKee's grandson, Mr. Syphax, said last night that the present plans of the family would not be changed, and that interment would soon be made in some burial ground of the Presbyterian church.

From a man who stood close to the family it was learned yesterday that

later of being singer.
This caveat marks the preliminary step in the contest the relatives mean to wage against the probating of the present will, in which the testator, a Presbyterian, cuts off his nearest relatives with scant annuities and devotes the greater part of his \$2,500,000 estate to the founding of an orphan asylum for white and colored youth, leaving the management of the scheme in the hands of Roman Catholics. The attorney who drew the will, Joseph P. McCullen, and Archbishop Ryan are named as executors.

The relatives who think they have been treated unfairly and who will make a fight for the colored man's millions are Mrs. Abbie A. Syphax, his daughter, who lived with him at 1030 Lombard Street to whom is devised an annuity of \$300; her five sons who are awarded a yearly income of \$50 each, and Harry McKee Minton, the child of a dead daughter and to whom \$50 is bequeathed annually.

Yesterday Theophilus J. Minton, an attorney, and son-in-law of Colonel McKee, said that he represented the daughter and the grandson of the dead millionaire, and that a contest would undoubtedly be made.

"I can say nothing now," said the lawyer, "but when the time comes I'll be able to speak volumes."

Archbishop Ryan was genuinely surprised when told of the scope of the testator's plans, and more surprised when told that he was an executor of the estate. "I did not know he was a Catholic at

some time ago," said Syphax significantly. "The sisters of the Catholic Church are visiting here so much that I feel sure he is interested in that religion. He is good to the sisters and not always good to me. If he leaves me half his estate and the other half to the Catholic Church I am well content. But I expect the Catholic Church will get a great deal."

Yesterday afternoon Mrs. Syphax said: "I have always tried to do my duty by father and to be cut off in my old age with nothing is very hard indeed. It seems very unfair that his own flesh and blood should be sacrificed to strangers."

A friend of the family declared that the millionaire was parsimonious.

"He was very close, indeed, was old man McKee," said this person. "It didn't cost him a thousand dollars a year to live and his only pleasure in life was accumulating money and property."

The college that the will provides for is to be erected on a farm near Croydon, and is to be a counterpart of Girard College in its workings and aims. The inmates shall be given a sound English education and a naval training similar to that given at Annapolis. In front of the college building there is to be an equestrian statue of Colonel McKee, and on Decoration and Founder's Day there is to be a parade of the students and the statue is to be decorated. The establishment of a Catholic Church, a rectory, a school and a convent at McKee City, N. J., are also provided for.