ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY
HON. FREDERICK DOUGLASS,
AT THE
THIRD ANNUAL FAIR
OF THE
TENNESSEE COLORED
Agricultural and Mechanical
ASSOCIATION,
on
Thursday, September 18, 1873,
at
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE.

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ADDRESS.

FELLOW-CITIZENS AND GENTLEMEN:

When I had the honor to receive your kind and unexpected invitation to visit Nashville, a city famous for its elegance and refinement, and the scene of so many thrilling events and patriotic associations during the late struggle for Union and liberty, I was naturally enough very much pleased with the prospect of being present on this occasion; but when I was informed that my visit was not to be either for pleasure or observation, but to make an address, and that the said address must be of a character appropriate to this your third annual agricultural exhibition, my joy and enthusiasm received a very decided check; the "native hue of resolution" was sickened over with the pale cast of thought. The fact is—and I am not ashamed to admit it—I felt very much as some of our Generals did when called upon to face the enemy on the open field of battle. I would have gladly been relieved of the command, and to have allowed the imposing task assigned me to fall into other and more competent hands. But your committee was composed of earnest and resolute men. They were men from Tennessee, and as willful as old Hickory himself. They made no account of any modest distrusts of my ability, would hear none of my excuses, and in short would be satisfied with nothing less than my presence and speech on this occasion. Well, gentlemen, these willful men have succeeded; they have got me here, but I beg you to remember the old saying, which must have originated with farmers, for the best things always have originated with them, that "one man may carry a horse to water, but twenty cannot make him drink."

The ground of my hesitation about coming here was not the cholera, for Nashville is now tolerably healthy; it was not the
distance I would have to travel to get here, for your railway communications are nearly equal to any in the country, but the trouble was the address, the appropriate address. There was the rub. It was the rub then and it is the rub now, and instead of disappearing on my approach it is all the more perplexing when I look out upon this expectant multitude, and remember the high-sounding praises heaped upon me in anticipation of my coming.

Gentlemen, this is an agricultural and mechanical industrial fair. I am surrounded to-day by industrious mechanics and farmers, and you have got me up here to tell you what I know about farming. Now, I am neither a farmer nor a mechanic. During the last thirty-five years I have been actively employed in a work which left me no time to study either the theory or the practice of farming. I could far more easily tell you what I don’t know about farming than what I do know, though the former would take more time to tell it than the latter. Well, gentlemen, I do not mean to censure your excellent committee for paying me in advance and insisting upon my coming, thus buying a pig in a bag, not knowing what kind of an animal would come forth at the opening, but I am bold to say that they violated one of the very first rules of successful farming, which is to see that the tools are always placed in the hands that can use them best. There are, undoubtedly, hundreds of colored men in the vicinity of Nashville, practical farmers and mechanics, who could address you upon the subjects of this occasion far more appropriately and effectively than I can do. This suggestion may seem rather late, but it may serve you a good turn when the business of selecting a speaker shall come around again.

But, gentlemen, there is a sunnier side to this distressing picture. Since I am now here, and there is no possible way of escape, I may at least employ the device of the boy who whistled in the graveyard to keep up his courage. Several considerations serve in some measure to reconcile me to my task. One of these is the fact that being a public speaker, I have often found myself in just such embarrassing situations at other times and places. If you will pardon me a little autobiography and, perhaps, a little egotism as
well, I will tell you, that like many other men, I have been all my life long doing extraordinary things for the first time, some of which had been better undone. I have been constantly required to undertake the performance of works which came upon me as a surprise, and for which I had no previous training or preparation, and while my work has generally been rather unskilfully and imperfectly done, I have always had a thoughtful and generous people for my judges, who have measured and estimated my achievements not by the rule of intrinsic excellence, but by the rule of my disadvantages, and have thus often accorded me higher praise than I could possibly claim on the score of merit.

Besides this, there is encouragement in the subject itself. Agriculture is one of the very oldest themes and one upon which only a genius can be expected to say anything either new or striking. Originality is out of the question. The knowledge already accumulated and recorded on this subject is vast and minute, and the man who can give you but a glimpse of one of the many sides of this vast accumulation of knowledge does not speak in vain.

In few things perhaps, more than in farming, does one find that there is nothing new under the sun. The sages of to-day do but reiterate the wisdom of the sages of antiquity. The perception of truth may be new or old, but the truth itself is neither old nor new, but eternal as the Universe. The discovery of the fundamental principles of Agriculture reach far beyond the limits of authentic history, for men tilled the soil long before they wrote books, and would never have written books if they had not tilled the soil. All the present rests upon all the past. The very best that any in my circumstances can do is to teach and preach the discoveries made by other men and at other times.

There are doubtless many great truths which yet remain to be discovered and applied to Agriculture, as well as to many other matters of human welfare. It was a favorite saying of Theodore Parker, that "all the space between man's mind and God's mind is crowded with truths which wait to be discovered and organized into law for the practice of men."

But mankind is so nearly on a level of equality that no one man
may claim the exclusive merit of original discovery. Truth, like
the gentle light of heaven, usually dawns upon more than one
mind at the same time, so that there is seldom a discovery which
has not more than one to claim the honor of it.

Gentlemen, I find still another source of encouragement. It is
in the terms you employ in announcing my subject to-day. I am
to speak to you of the importance of agricultural and mechanical
industry and of united effort on the part of our people to improve
their physical, moral, and social condition. Upon a subject so
broad and comprehensive and deeply interesting it would be almost
impossible to speak without saying something capable of being
turned to use by sensible people.

Now, gentlemen, having looked out for myself, always an im-
portant lesson, and one which farmers readily learn, let me attend
to you. I give you my warmest congratulations, first of all, upon
the attitude you have assumed before the American people this day.
I especially congratulate you upon the noble example you have
set for our whole race. You have gone to work like earnest men,
fully believing in the future of your people. You have wisely
availed yourselves of a well known power, the power of associa-
tion, organization, mutual counsel and cooperation. You have
dared to organize an Agricultural and Mechanical Association for
the State of Tennessee. You propose to avail yourselves of what-
ever knowledge or wisdom there may be in this State, which can
assist you in the work of your general improvement. You have
dared to open here in the city of Nashville a State Agricultural
Fair, to display the rich fruits of your industry, and to ask your
fellow-countrymen of all conditions and colors to view and inspect
them. This is an act, on your part as brave as it is wise. It proves
that you are not ashamed of your achievements. It proves that
you, like the great Oliver Cromwell and all other brave men, want
to be painted as you are, and to receive no other or higher credit
than that which you honestly win by open and fair competition.

The organization of your State Agricultural Society and this
third annual exhibition demonstrate that you appreciate the new
order of things which has dawned upon the country. By these
two signs you advertise and inform the world of your farewell, your departure forever from the moral and intellectual stagnation of a by-gone condition, and have taken up your line of march under the banner of liberty with the more advanced peoples of the earth to higher plains of civilization, culture, and refinement.

I congratulate you again, gentlemen, upon the point of time at which you begin your public career of agricultural industry. In this respect the conditions of success are nearly perfect. You have taken the tide at its flood. You start in the full blaze of the accumulated wisdom of ages. No fifty years of human life and exertion have been so crowded with discovery and invention as the first half of this nineteenth century. You may now walk by sight where others only walked by faith. You have not to feel your way in the dark or to hew out any new road to fortune. The very elements around you have been fighting on your side, and, like a fortunate general, you came upon the field of action at exactly the right moment to secure an easy and brilliant victory. Agricultural implements of world-approved materials and of world-approved patterns are ready to your hand. The toil and drudgery of ancient farming have been banished from the field. The heavy cradle which wore out your manhood, and the sickle which bent your bodies in pain, belong to a by-gone age. The old-fashioned hoe, broad, heavy, and cumbersome; and the wooden plow, with its miserable mold-board, and its so-called steel point, that kept you always running to the blacksmith's shop, have followed the sickle and the cradle to their common resting place. Science, the noblest and grandest artificer of human fortune and well-being, the source and explanation of all progress, has patiently unfolded the nature and composition of plants, and made us acquainted with the properties of the common earth, wherever they grow. The quality of soil, best suited to a given class of plants, has been accurately ascertained. The chemical properties of various kinds of manure have been thoroughly-investigated. Even the weather, hitherto supposed to be hidden in the inscrutable bosom of infinity, and only known to God, has been compelled to give up its mystery. Instead of being governed by any supposed supreme will,
or controlled by the wishes and prayers of men, it is subject to and acts in accordance with eternal and irreversible laws. “Old Probabilities,” as the commissioner of this department of knowledge is called, with his nerves of wire, extending all over the country, is able to tell us daily and in advance what storms are in the skies, and when and where they may be expected to descend. There is light everywhere and darkness nowhere. We have only to open our eyes and to behold all around us the essential conditions of successful exertion.

I have spoken of the impossibility of presenting anything original upon this subject. In reading the works of modern writers, it is surprising to find how much and how far we have been anticipated by those who have gone before us in the field of thought and discovery. Most that we have done in modern times has been, after all, to find new applications of old principles. The plow, though vastly improved, is the same implement known by that name thousands of years ago. Deep plowing and draining, and a thorough pulverization of the soil, so earnestly and eloquently insisted upon nowadays, and very wisely so, though now better accomplished by means of our better tools than at any previous time, especially in England, were well known to the cultivators of the soil in China and Egypt centuries ago. The Egyptians even deified Osiris, the inventor of the plow. The small farm theory, by which a man may double the number of his acres, by skillful and thorough cultivation, and one which has been so eloquently and persistently advocated by the lamented Horace Greeley, was by no means a new idea, or in any sense original with him. Cato, two thousand years ago, held and advocated precisely the same idea. The wisdom of this theory may be appropriately commented on this occasion. The principle underlying the small farm theory is very easily comprehended. Everybody knows that distance is an element to be considered in farming and in much other work. As much time and labor are required to walk, plow, or drive over one acre of poor ground as over one acre of rich ground, while the poor acre will give you only half the production of the rich one, and that an article of inferior quality.
In the one case you are but half paid for your toil, while in the other you reap an abundant reward both in quantity and in quality.

The same principle, as I have said, operates elsewhere. Talking with Mr. William Whipper, a successful lumber merchant in the city of Philadelphia, he told me, he could not afford to keep a single piece of inferior lumber in his yard, and the reason he assigned for keeping only the very best quality of lumber, was that land was too dear and rents too high, to be occupied by anything of inferior quality. Besides, said he, a poor stick of timber will occupy as much space, and require as many hands and as much labor to handle it, as would a superior article, while it would only command half the price. I came to the conclusion in listening to this reasoning, that I had met in Mr. Whipper a wise man as well as a successful man, one who practically carried out the idea that whatever is worth doing at all is worth being done well.

Gentlemen, I would like to make a speech to-day of the orthodox agricultural pattern. I would like to tell you of the wise things said and done in respect to ancient and modern tillage. Neither you nor I can afford to be ignorant of the facts of this history, for knowledge is power, here as elsewhere, and there is no danger that we shall know too much about any useful employment. There is for us in the agricultural history of the world a special cause for complacency. If to the race to which we belong mankind can ascribe any glory, the achievements upon which it is founded stretch far away into the past. It is pleasant to know that in color, form, and features, we are related to the first successful tillers of the soil; to the people who taught the world agriculture; that the civilization which made Greece, Rome, and Western Europe illustrious, and even now makes our own land glorious, sprung forth from the bosom of Africa. For, while this vast continent was yet undiscovered by civilized men; while the Briton and the Gallic races wandered like beasts of prey in the forests, the people of Egypt and Ethiopia rejoiced in well cultivated fields and in abundance of corn. I follow only the father of history when I say that the ancient Egyptians were black and their hair
woolly. However this may be disputed now, there is no denying that these people more nearly resembled the African type than the Caucasian.

I would like to dwell here on the progress of agriculture, and note the causes which have led to its rapid development in this country; show how diversified labor produces a home market for the productions of our soil; how the prosecution of internal improvements of rivers and harbors, of canals, railroads and steam-navigation have stimulated agricultural industry; how science, observation and experiment have assisted in its general development; and especially would it be pleasant to comply with the letter as well as the spirit of your invitation, dwell upon the general importance of this branch of industry; picture to you the midnight gloom and destitution which would fall upon the world if its wheels should cease to revolve, and the earth refuse food for man and beast; how commerce would languish, how mechanical machinery would gradually become silent; how the iron horse would stand still on the track; how the fire would die out on the hearth, the gaunt and withered arms of the mother hang down in despair; the wan babe in the cradle sleep its last sleep, and the busy hopeful, courageous and joyous world sink back again into the depths and darkness of barbarism. It would be well enough, too, if there were time, to give you the testimony of poets, scholars, statesmen and philosophers of all countries and ages in favor of country life; to follow, especially, the retiring statesman, when worn and broken by the storms of public life, or when covered with its honors, to the old farm of his birth, and paint the scene of peace and sweet content in which he spends his declining years, and, at last, sinks to rest forever; to dwell at large upon the soothing charms of nature, the honest affection and trust of well-treated domestic animals, to prove that among the truly beautiful and healthful scenes of this world, there is none more beautiful than a well-managed farm.

But, gentlemen, this is an opportunity too unusual, an occasion too peculiar, and my relation to you is too singular to make such a disposition of your time justifiable.
Mine, to-day, is a rare privilege. No man perhaps was ever called upon to address so vast a concourse of newly-emancipated people; a people wide awake and just starting in the race of mental, moral and social progress; a people of whom, heretofore, no reckoning was made; a people recognized as standing outside of the circle, and ranked by the laws of the land with horses, sheep, and swine, and like these to be held and bought and sold.

Gentlemen, since this is our first meeting since the revolution, in your situation and mine, I feel less like dwelling on agriculture in general than calling upon you to join me in loud, earnest, joyous and long-continued cheers over our newly-gained freedom. Agricultural industry to-day has an interest for me mainly in respect to the new order of things upon which we have now fairly entered. How it can be made to serve us, as a particular class, is the commanding question of the hour.

If we look abroad over our country and observe the condition of the colored people, we shall find their greatest want to be regular and lucrative employments for their energies. They have secured their freedom, it is true, but not the friendship and favor of the people around them. The sentiment that greeted them all over the South, when their fetters were broken, was: let the negro starve! Happily to-day that sentiment is seldom heard, but though seldom heard—I am sorry to say—it is still felt, and is active in a thousand ways to our hurt. It keeps back the wages of the black laborer by fraud; it refuses to rent and sell land; it excludes them from printers' unions and other mechanical associations; it refuses to teach them trades, and shuts them out from all respectable employments, and consoles itself with the theory that the negroes—like the Indians—will ultimately die out.

The effect of this ruling in the American mind has driven the negroes in great numbers from the country into the large cities, and into menial positions, where they easily learn to imitate the vices and follies of the least exemplary whites, and they perish as a consequence. "Let the negroes starve!" thus executes itself.

In these circumstances, I hail agriculture as a refuge for the oppressed. The grand old earth has no prejudices against race,
color, or previous condition of servitude, but flings open her ample breast to all who will come to her for succor and relief. Agriculture is simply the act of cultivating the ground so as to secure its largest and best product for sustaining life and health. There are special and pressing reasons why we, of all the people of the United States, should master this great art. It is our last resort, and if we fail here I see not how we can succeed elsewhere. We are not like the Irish, an organized political power, welded together by a common faith. We are not shrewd like the Hebrew, capable of making fortunes by buying and selling old clothes. We are not like the Germans, who can spend half their time in lager beer saloons and still get rich; but we are just what we are: laborious, joyous, thoughtless, improvident people, just released from our thrall, and with just such necessities as agricultural life will secure.

I have already referred generally to the favorable conditions afforded to successful agriculture on our part. Besides land, labor, and skill, there must be heat, moisture, and manure. While man is required to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, nature must give us warmth and moisture, or there is no bread. In the farthest North, where cold, ice, and snow are perpetual, and in the far South, under a vertical sun, where the fierce heat drinks up all the moisture and leaves the land a sandy desert, agriculture, of course, in such lands and latitudes is impossible.

Happily for us, we have no such heat and no such cold to contend with here. In this respect there is no country in the world more highly favored than the United States, and it would be hard to point to any State more favorable to farming than your own great State of Tennessee. You have mountain, valley, river, and plain, heat and moisture, and a beautifully temperate climate, where, with knowledge, skill, and industry, you may obtain the highest agricultural results.

Some of your old citizens, no doubt, continue to regret the change which has taken place in the relations of the people of Tennessee. In the loss of slavery the State, in their estimation, has parted with the source of its happiness and prosperity. To my mind it would
be hard to find a greater mistake than this. Emancipation in this State was not only a triumph of justice, but a triumph of agricultural industry. It was not merely a blessing to the slave, but a blessing to the master. I put it to the common sense of all who hear me: what possible motive had the slave for a careful, successful cultivation of the soil? What concern could he have for increasing the wealth of the master, or for improving and beautifying the land? The wealth of the master did not attach to the slave, but the reverse. The natural tendency of wealth was to deepen the chasm between the master and the slave, and to break up all sympathy between them. The small slave owners went to the field with their few bondmen and worked side by side with them. Humane and kindly relations sprang up between them; common toils and common privations made them, in some sense, friends. But the reverse was the case with the rich and great masters. Their hands were unused to toil. They could afford to leave their slaves in the hands of soulless overseers and drivers, who had no motives of kindness and good will. Thus it was for the interest of the slave to make the rich man poor and the poor man poorer. To reduce as far as possible the difference between themselves and others, and since they themselves could not be masters, they had a direct and powerful motive for reducing their masters to the poverty of slaves.

This however, was not the worst element of the situation. The very soil of your State was cursed with a burning sense of injustice. Slavery was the parent of anger and hate. Your fields could not be lovingly planted nor faithfully cultivated in its presence. The eye of the overseer could not be everywhere, and cornhills could be covered with cloths in preference to soft and pulverized soil in their absence, for the hand that planted cared nothing for the harvest. Thus you will see that emancipation has liberated the land as well as the people.

In contemplating the successful husbandry of the British Islands, abounding as they do, with fertile fields and the most perfectly formed and best developed cattle, a distinguished Frenchman was led to exclaim: "It is not fertility but liberty that cultivates a
country." The State of Tennessee is now to be cultivated by liberty; by knowledge which comes of liberty; by the respectability of labor; by the motive of general welfare, and by the sense of patriotism confined to no particular class, and I predict for her a vast and general increase of happiness and prosperity in the new era which has dawned upon her.

Gentlemen, if this prophecy of prosperity to your State shall prove slow of fulfillment, or be defeated, the fault will not be due to the new order of liberty, but to the old order of slavery. It will not be in the emancipated slave, but in the discontented master. It will not be due to any inherent defect of the principle of liberty, but to the inherent disposition of despotic power, to supplant freedom. A dog will scratch his neck long after his collar is removed. The illusion is kept up when its cause has departed. Neither the slave nor his master can abandon all at once the deeply intrenched errors and habits of centuries.

I take it that one part of the mission of this State Agricultural Association is the speedy and radical extinction of the evils inherited by the emancipated class from their former condition, and that, therefore, it is appropriate on this occasion, to point out some of the more palpable of those errors for condemnation and banishment, and inculcate in their stead the wiser and better ideas, suggested by the condition upon which we have entered.

TREATMENT OF ANIMALS.

There is no denying that slavery had a direct and positive tendency to produce coarseness and brutality in the treatment and management of domestic animals, especially those most useful to agricultural industry. Not only the slave, but the horse, the ox and the mule shared the general feeling of indifference to rights naturally engendered by a state of slavery. The master blamed the overseer; the overseer the slave, and the slave the horses, oxen and mules, and violence and brutality fell upon the animals as a consequence. Now, there is no successful farming without well-trained and well-treated horses and oxen, and one of the greatest pleasures connected with agricultural life may be found in the
pleasant relations capable of subsisting between the farmer and his four-legged companions; for they are company as well as helpers in his toil. I have seen men spend valuable hours of the best part of the day, chasing the horse and the mule in the open field, which but for the abuses heaped upon them when in harness, would have come instantly upon the call of their master. The loss arising from this source is twofold. Both man and beast have been wearied by the chase, and the temper of both has been rendered unfavorable to calm and steady exertion. It should be the study of every farmer to make his horse his companion and friend, and to do this, there is but one rule, and that is, uniform sympathy and kindness. All loud and boisterous commands, all brutal flogging should be banished from the field, and only words of cheer and encouragement should be tolerated. A horse is in many respects like a man. He has the five senses, and has memory, affection and reason to a limited degree. When young, untrained and untamed, he has unbounded faith in his strength and fleetness. He runs, jumps and plays in the pride of his perfections. But convince him that he is a creature of law as well as of freedom by a judicious and kindly application of your superior power, and he will conform his conduct to that law, far better than your most law-abiding citizen.

CARE OF AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS.

Gentlemen, in farming, as everywhere else, time is money; and one-tenth of all the time of some farmers is lost to useful labor in searching for and mending tools carelessly flung down anywhere and everywhere and left forgotten to rust, decay, and ruin. I have seen in some of our Western States, amid the snows and rains of winter, costly plows, harrows, and mowing machines exposed to all the destructive forces of the elements. Of course, men who farm thus bring no honor to agriculture, but are a disgrace to that vocation. The loss of time, labor, and money, as in the other cases, are not the only evils of this style of practical farming. The loss of temper, the mental confusion to which this one evil gives rise, will rack a man's constitution more than the heaviest, steadiest strokes of well-directed exertion.
THE WELL AND THE WOODEPILE.

Life is said to be made up of little things, and small annoyances are often more distressing to the temper than large ones. There can be no happy and successful farming when there is no peace at home. When the wife smiles and the children are happy and gloeful, the toil and burdens of the husbandman are light and easily borne. Everything, therefore, which tends to make home happy is in the line of a wise economy, both of time and labor. Where a woman must go half a mile in the woods to tote brush or rotten bark to make a fire, or a quarter of a mile to the spring to fetch water, it is impossible that household affairs can go on either regularly or pleasantly. Such economy is unworthy of the sense of a Hottentot or a Bushman. If you come up tired and hungry from the field; if your house is not neat, sweet, and in order; if the eyes of your wife and daughter are red with smoke and tears; if your children are fretting and crying, and you yourself suffer from loss of temper, you have in fact only yourself to blame. You have neglected to supply your woodshed with an ample quantity of sound and well-seasoned wood, and to put down a well of pure water at your door, and have thus omitted the primary conditions of peace, purity, and order in your household. By all means, be sure of your water and wood!

MANURES.

Successful farming does not entirely depend upon good plowing, harrowing, and hoeing, nor prompt attention to seedtime and harvest. Every crop gathered from the field takes something valuable from the soil upon which it is grown, and the richest land in the world can be made poor if we take everything from it and give it nothing in return. While providing for ourselves, our next best thought should be given to the question as to how we shall provide for the wants of the soil out of which comes our own living. All flesh is grass, and the amount of vegetable matter we obtain from the earth will be the measure of the life and happiness of the men and animals who subsist upon it. Now, there need be no such thing in the world as worn-out land. The same
soil has been cultivated in China during the space of two thousand years, and the land is as rich to-day as when the plow and the spade first turned it to the light and heat of the sun. The explanation of this prolonged fertility is manure. The Chinaman knows its value and puts his knowledge in practice. He knows how to make, save, and apply it. My advice to you is to go and do likewise. Your first maxim should be: let nothing be wasted! Nothing that will rot in the ground is useless, and nothing should be allowed to decay unused. The very water and soap employed in washing your hands and clothes should find their way to your trimly arranged bed of compost. The bones from your table should be made also to do double duty. The soil of England is richer and yields better crops to-day than two hundred years ago, and the reason is the same there as in China. They attend to the wants of the soil as well as to their own. Feed the land and it will feed you! Starve the land and it will starve you!

**AGRICULTURAL BOOKS AND PAPERS.**

Knowledge is power. There is no work that men are required to do, which they cannot better and more economically do with education than without it. The trouble with us as a people has been to work without a knowledge of the theory of work. We could build ships if some one would draft them. We could build a house if some one would draw the plan. All that we have done has been by rote. We have farmed without a knowledge of the philosophy of farming. We have used our muscles, but not our minds. Under the old **regime** we were not expected to think, but only to do as we were told. We were not allowed to profit even by our own experience, and to do things in the easiest and best way which our practical knowledge might suggest. The master and the overseer directed every stroke, and we were but living machines. All is changed now. The machine must begin to think, and in this the reading of agricultural books and papers will materially assist. It used to be said, if you want to keep a secret from a negro, put it in a book or newspaper. This must be so no longer. Every colored farmer and mechanic should take
and read one or more of the many excellent mechanic and agricultural journals. If you cannot read yourself, let your son or daughter read to you. Depend upon it, an hour spent in this way, will do more for you than the labor of any other hour in the day. Muscle is mighty, but mind is mightier, and there is no better field for the exercise of mind than is found in the cultivation of the soil.

THE FARMER’S NATURAL ENEMIES.

I shall attempt no solution of the origin of evil in the world. Whether it came by the fall of Adam or the fall of anybody else, I neither know nor care, for it does not matter. It is enough to know that we have it and it is in abundance, and that the best use we can make of it is to resist and destroy it as far as we can. All nature teems with it, and the life of a farmer is a constant battle. He not only has to contend with the elements, but with all manner of destructive insects. Flies, bugs, worms, caterpillars, grasshoppers, and locusts spring out of the ground like armed warriors and endeavor to flank and defeat him. He must fight or die. His foes will neither treat nor compromise. It is “kill or be killed.” Not an hour is to be lost. Time gives strength to the enemy and weakness to the farmer. This insect host must be met and stamped out without delay. The advantage of a single hour will sometimes enable the caterpillar to ruin your fruit crop. Prevention is better than cure, and it is better to destroy those enemies in their eggs than to wait until they are full of life and activity. The warrior uses the telescope to discover his enemy. The farmer should use the microscope. With a little experience in its use, he can anticipate his foe. Indeed, you should go a step further than this. You should not only make war upon the enemy, but upon the conditions of his existence. Like most of the enemies of human life and welfare, they originate in darkness and in all manner of unclean and unsightly places. Break up the nest of weed, brier, and thorns in your fence corners. Take away your old, rotten and worm-eaten ground rail. Put a sound one in its place. Let in the bright sunlight and the pure air. Summon fire and water, if it need be, to
clean out these breeders of vermin to prey upon your crops. For when you have done all in your power, you will still see more to do, but you will at least be rewarded by abundant returns for your wisdom, courage, vigilance and industry.

UNION AND IMPROVEMENT.

Gentlemen, I approach this subject with less confidence of meeting your approval than at other points. As a race, we have suffered from two very opposite causes. Disparagement on the one hand, and undue praise on the other. I propose to err on neither side. This question of improvement or non-improvement involves the whole subject of our destiny as a part of the American people. In other words, it is the question whether we shall advance or recede, rise or fall, survive or perish; for one or the other of these things must necessarily happen to us. To stand still is utterly impossible. If we ever could hold our own, and stand where we now are, the effect of improvement in all around us would make our standing still positive retrogression. Of course, gentlemen, we stand to-day in point of civilization far in the rear of our white fellow-citizens. We are, in fact, wearing the old clothes left by a by-gone generation. The books we read, the sermons we hear, the prayers we repeat, are all obtained from the white race. We have neither made books, sermons, prayers, nor hymns. We have no science nor philosophy of our own. We have neither history nor poetry. As Andrew Johnson used to say of Congress: "We are hanging on the verge" of the white man’s civilization. It is painful to make such an admission as this; but nothing is gained by concealing the truth either from ourselves or from others.

The question, which the future has to answer, is: Whether the negro is what he is to-day because of his mental and moral constitution, or because he has been enslaved and degraded for centuries. If it shall be found, after the lapse of twenty-five years of freedom, that the colored people of this country have made no improvement in their social condition, it will confirm the opinion that the negro is, by his very nature, limited to a servile condition. But if, on the other hand, we supply the world with the proof of
our advancement to a plane, even a little above that on which slavery left us, we shall prove that, like all other men, we are capable of civilization, where its conditions are accessible to us. Still further, to simplify the question, which the present is pressing upon us. It is: Whether the black man will prove a better master to himself than his white master was to him.

This, then, is the work to which we have to address ourselves as a race. We are to prove that we can better our own condition, and that by the development of our own self-contained qualities, I need not stop here to point out the particular modes of action by which this can be accomplished. I will only indicate one.

**ACCUMULATE PROPERTY.**

Yes, accumulate property. This may sound to you like a new gospel. You have been accustomed to hear that money is the root of all evil; that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of Heaven; that this world is of no account; that we should take no thought for to-morrow, and much more of the same sort. In answer to all which I say: that no people can ever make any social or mental improvement whose exertions are thus limited. Poverty is our greatest calamity. It draws down upon us the very condition which makes us a helpless, hopeless, dependent, and dispirited people, the target for the contempt and scorn of all around us. On the other hand, property, money, if you please, will purchase for us the only condition upon which any people can rise to the dignity of genuine manhood; for, without property, there can be no leisure. Without leisure, there can be no thought. Without thought, there can be no invention. Without invention, there can be no progress.

But how shall we get money? Work for it, and save it when you get it. I have spoken of slavery as our enemy. I have nothing to take back at that point. It has robbed us of education. It has robbed us of the care due us from our mothers. It has written its ugliness in our countenance, deformed our feet, and twisted our limbs out of shape; and yet this same slavery has been, in some sense, our best friend. It has trained us to regular industry, and
hardened our muscles to toil, and thus has left in our hands the staff of all accomplishments. We can work, and the grateful earth yields as readily and as bountifully to the touch of black industry as of white. We can work, and by this means we can retrieve all our losses. Knowledge, wisdom, culture, refinement, manners, are all founded on work, and the wealth which work brings.

As I already have said: we must save as well as work. This cannot be done by traveling from place to place in search of new homes. Rolling stones gather no moss. Emerson says that the men who made Rome worth going to see staid there. In nine cases out of ten a man’s condition is worse by changing his location. You had far better endeavor to remove the evil from your door than to remove and leave it there. “It is better to endure the ills you have than to fly to others you know not of.” If you have got a few acres, stick by them. The sweat and toil you put into them will add to their value and enable you to buy more. Every new beginning you make will have its peculiar troubles. Infancy is the time of special dangers to measures as well as to men. Every baby must have the whooping cough and measles. Life is too short, time is too valuable to be wasted in the experiment of seeking new homes. People are about as good in your neighborhood as anywhere else in the world, and may need you to make them better.

But, gentlemen, I have detained you too long already. Our destiny is in our own hands. We are no longer slaves, but freemen. We are no longer property, but persons. We are not aliens, but citizens. We are not only men, but men among men. If any people may have a future, a prosperous and happy future, such a future is possible to us, and I hope it will be the business of every man who hears my voice to-day, to contribute his full share to the sum of the common welfare of our race.
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