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I appreciate to the fullest extent the honor which you have conferred upon me; and can but feel the responsibilities incumbent upon me in accepting the invitation.

This occasion, it seems to me, will appear to the future students of this department and historians of this great institution which has done so much in providing for our race physicians, dentists, teachers, preachers, musicians, and men and women who have engaged in business, as one of the beacon lights of its great career. As long as this institution stands, the names of these young men who, to-day, go forth with the blessings of their instructors and the best wishes of the whole faculty and their friends for their success in life, will be linked indissolubly with this department as its first graduates. As this occasion is unique in the history of Walden University, so it is in my own career; for it is the first time that I have had the pleasure—nay, I should say "horror"—of breaking into the ranks of so-called commencement orators. I feel justified in using the word "horror" when I think that I, a mere student of "the art preservative of all arts" am assigned the task of delivering an address to young men who have drunk so deeply from the fountain of knowledge, supplied in a never-ending stream, as it were, from the teachings of Gutenberg, Jenson, Franklin and Underwood and your own Professors Hawkins. I fear that whatever I might say will prove merely superfluous, but, since I am facing the problems that daily confront one in the school of experience, questions which you will meet if you follow your chosen profession, and, like you, am working for the advancement of my race; I speak to you, as it is given me to see, in the future of the Negro in printing.

In the onward march of civilization from the feudalism of the medieval ages, when learning was confined to the aristocratic and religious classes, to the present, when enlightenment is almost universal, no other invention has been such a contributing factor for the good of humanity as has that of printing. It has been an assisting force in discovery, has preserved inventions, and has been the medium of promulgating doctrines that have revolutionized the affairs of the inhabitants of this mundane sphere.

Columbus and the explorers who followed in his footsteps received their inspiration from the printed page. Later, England, in her fight for the establishment of those principles of freedom upon which this government of ours is founded, was impelled by the broadsides which mysteriously appeared attacking the errors of the day.

In the case of the American Negro, what greater example of the potency of printing can be given than that of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which stirred the whole continent and awakened the people to the inhumanities of slavery? In Russia to-day we see a revolution, the ultimate outcome of which can only be greater human liberties, fostered and augmented by this self-same invention—printing. If printing has been the open sesame by which men of intellect, the master minds of other races, have worked great reforms; then what might not this selfsame art hold in store for us, the members of the Negro race?

The exact origin of printing, like that of many other inventions or world movements that have wrought good, is shrouded in mystery. It is claimed by the Germans that a man named Gutenberg is the father of the art. The Dutch, with equal assurance and equal proof, give the same credit to a member of their race named Coster. As to which of these men the honor really belongs, we do not know. Both lived about the same time and both worked at the art in different cities at about the same time. This however, we do know, the principles which one or both of the men perfected, the basic principle, had been used by the Chinese and other races centuries before either was born.

We know further that to these men tribute must be paid undoubtedly for the impetus which they gave to the study and practice of the trade by which was gained for it in a few years, votaries in all the nations of Europe. They were the pioneers. Their disciples from that day to the present have labored with an ingenuity worthy the great calling to so improve the facilities, cheapen the cost of the finished product as to make possible the universal dissemination of knowledge.

But the growth of printing has not been like that of the mushroom. For almost four hundred years after Gutenberg gave to the world the first book bearing the name of the printer and the year of the printing, the product of the printing plant was distributed almost exclusively among the rich, the method of printing having been different only in a few particulars from the crude processes used by the master of Mainz. The real revolution in the art was accomplished in 1804, when steam was first used as a motive power for running printing presses. It was then, so far as the mechanical devices used for the cheapening of the output and the broadening of the scope of the trade, that printing received its baptism of brains and really became an art. Following the departure from the old methods, inventions came thick

and fast. So fast that the modern printing plant is an institution that contains machines of almost human intelligence. And, from the England of the restoration, in which by legal statutes only twenty printers were allowed to practice the art, we have advanced so far that in America in 1900, a so-called backward race, according to the census reports, 1650 men and women following the profession. This, I might add, understates rather than exaggerates the facts as to the number of Negroes engaged in printing.

But why dwell on the past? I need not recount in detail the history of the art for the questions which confront you, which should demand your attention are of the present. The questions which most vitally concern you and me as printers are: "What has the Negro done in this field of labor?" "What is he doing?" "What are his prospects?"

The Negro, comparatively speaking, is a new factor in the great art of printing. His achievements, when compared with those of the great Caucasian race, have been infinitesimal. But, when we take into consideration that the white man has had the benefits of civilization for thousands of years, while the Negro—the American Negro—has been a student of the craft for less than a half century, that his clientele is—as the histories of nations are reckoned—just but yesterday emerged from slavery, the poorest of the poor, steeped in an ignorance that his masters had assiduously cultivated by means of legal statutes and the unwritten law of the plantation—the whip—I say, when we take into consideration the many disadvantages under which we have labored, the American Negro's advancement in the practice of "the art preservative of all arts" has been simply phenomenal. He has made no great invention to add lustre to his own name nor glory and honor to the race; but with faith in himself, love for the race and a firm belief in the brightness of the future, he has established in almost every city and hamlet an office or newspaper of some kind from which is promulgated the gospel of hope.

The Negro is so recently from slavery that his past and present status in printing are so closely interwoven that in picturing the present we give the history of our race so far as regards the craft. Most of us are old enough to have first hand information of those men of the race, some of whom are still living, who first ventured into the printing or publishing business. As to the present, the outlook is, indeed, encouraging. Here in Nashville, we have much to be proud of. We see establishments that will compare favorably with those of any other race. In Jackson, Richmond, Va.; Charlotte, N. C.; Philadelphia, Pa.; Dallas, Tex., and many other places a like success can be noted. In Philadelphia, and Hopkinsville, Ky., we have our daily newspapers; in Boston, New York, Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia, our magazines, and in Nashville one publishing house, owned, controlled and operated exclusively by Negroes, if we take into consideration the number of blacks compared to the number of whites south of the Mason and Dixon line, sends out more second-class matter annually than any white institution of its kind in the city. In this city and elsewhere books also are being published by Negroes. Weekly newspapers are being published in almost every hamlet, and some of these possess great merit.

As I mention these enterprises I wish to call your attention especially to the fact that those who are succeeding in a majority of the instances cited are practical printers. As bright as the present is for those of our race engaged in the allied trades of printing, it is as nothing compared to future prospects. We have made wonderful strides, but what we have done is as insignificant in magnitude as was the opening session of what is now Walden University compared to the great session which is just coming to a close.

The present is bright, but the future has a brightness which shines more and more unto the perfect day. I have mentioned briefly the varied publishing interests of the race. Curious as it may seem, though most of these enterprises have practical printers at the head, the actual mechanical work is done in printing offices run by white men. Many reasons are given why this is so, but the most potent, I think, is that the demand for competent workmen is in excess of the supply. The supply is increasing and so is the demand, and the demand will continue to grow.

As to the future, Walden, Fisk, Howard, Tuskegee, Wilberforce and similar institutions, together with the public schools of the country, are almost daily turning out men and women with trained intellects who will not be content to be hewers of wood and drawers of water. Nor will they be satisfied to enter only one or two professions; but following where ever their judgment dictates is the best course, they will enter all the fields of business occupied by any other race. These men, these women, closely identified with the interests of the race—and they must be identified with the race if they hope to succeed—re-inforced by the influence which they will (Continued on Page Three.)

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PLATE 1.

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