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Our Motto: "God will Help those who try to Help Themselves."

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ORATION BY HON. FREDRICK DOUGLASS ON THE OCCASION OF THE SECOND ANNUAL EXPOSITION OF THE COLORED PEOPLE OF NORTH CAROLINA, DELIVERED ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 1 ST, 1880.

At the conclusion of Gov. Jarvis' address, the Master of Ceremonies introduced the Honorable Frederick Douglass, Marshal of the District of Columbia. Mr. Douglass prefaced his address by expressing the pleasure which he felt at being called upon to speak to so large a concourse of colored people, and his gratification at seeing the Governor of the State present, and speaking such words of sympathy and encouragement as he had just heard. He said he had found things quite different from what he expected, and that Gov. Jarvis had occupied a good deal of the field which he had intended to make his own. His speech was interspersed with many amusing anecdotes which our limited space will not permit us to print in full. Mr. Douglass spoke as follows:

FELLOW CITIZENS, GENTLEMEN AND LADIES:

I regret that I have to begin my address with an apology. The days have been few and my engagements many, since I was waited upon by a committee of gentlemen from North Carolina, representing this exposition, and was formally invited to appear in this place and preside and deliver an address appropriate to this occasion. The time allotted for the preparation and the magnitude of the subject upon which you have desired me to speak, caused me some embarrassment and led me at once to ask your kind indulgence.

I am, however, encouraged to proceed by several considerations: The first is this, I have often found myself in just such circumstances before. I have frequently been called upon to do things for which I had no special training or preparation. Another encouraging fact is, that however unskillfully and imperfectly, I have been able to do my work, my judges have ever been generous, if not always just. They have measured my efforts, not so much by their intrinsic value as by the difficulties under which they were made. But no more of apology.

Mine to-day is a sure privilege. No man in this country was ever called upon to address such a concourse of newly emancipated people, as I am upon this occasion. I meet with you to-day, at the starting point in the racial progress, moral, social and material progress. It is a great circumstance. For more than two centuries you were cut off from the human race. You were not recognized among the rest of mankind, and the principles of justice and liberty supposed to apply to other men, were not thought to be applicable to you. You were regarded and treated as standing outside the circle of civilization, and of civilizing forces. Having eyes, you were not expected to see. Having ears, you were not expected to hear. Having tongues, you were not expected to speak. The laws of the land classed you with horses, sheep and swine; articles of sale and barter, chattels personal, to all intents and purposes whatsoever. Your bodies, your bones, your brains belonged not to you, but to other men. Your faculties and powers were all the property and support of those who claimed to own you, their thoughts are turned to the change. Behold that change! How sudden, how complete, how vast and how wonderful is the transformation?

In view of this tremendous revolution, I feel less like dwelling on the particular subject upon which I am expected to speak, than calling upon you to join me, in loud, earnest and long continued shouts of joy over our newly acquired freedom.

The subject of agriculture is the main and most important which can claim our thoughtful attention. It is

one of the oldest upon which men have thought, spoken and written, and it must therefore readily occur to you that there is little of originality to be expected in what I may have to say concerning it. Genius itself, and I am no genius, would find it hard to say anything new, edifying or striking in its praise or in its explanation.

I have read over a number of agricultural addresses lately. I have got little help from them. They are very much like bricks on the same wall, or houses in Philadelphia, one is exactly the counter part of the other, only some are a trifle smaller than others. Mine to-day, should it get into print, will be like the others, only a little smaller.

I think it is somewhat presumptuous in me, any how, to speak here on this subject at all. There are undoubtedly hundreds of colored men in North Carolina who could tell you more about farming than I can. You have among you practical farmers and mechanics and others well qualified by experience and observation, to teach intelligently and effectively the conditions essential to success, in their various vocations. The only trouble with them is that they live here and are easily attainable. They have not to travel a thousand miles when invited to speak and you do not have to travel a thousand miles to invite them. So it ever is, the prophet is not without honor, save in his own country.

When we consider the importance of agriculture, as the source and main-spring of all other forms of industry, that it is to all other forms of labor what wood and coal is to the locomotive, and the foundation of all the wealth of the world, when we further consider the vast amount of thought and study devoted to it, there is surprise that the sum of knowledge on the subject is so small, and that it has increased so slowly. The sages of to-day do but echo the wisdom of the sages of antiquity. The principles of success in tilling the soil, must have been discovered very early in the life of the race. There was bread before there were books. Men were eaters before they were readers. They were practical farmers before they were agricultural speech makers. The most that such speech makers can now do is to preach and teach the principles which other men have discovered and applied, and asked people to observe and do them with all their might.

There are doubtless many truths in respect to agriculture that remain to be discovered and applied. Nature is inexhaustible and does not favor monopoly of her secrets to any. Men are so nearly on a level that no one of them can properly claim any discovery as exclusively his. Here as elsewhere, nature is never partial or exclusive. Her revelations are open to all alike.

Most that has been done in modern times, in the matter of tilling the soil to advantage has been the application of new inferences from old and well known principles and the same of implements. The plow of to-day is simply an improvement upon the plow of a thousand years ago.

Like many other good and useful things, the plow, the king of agricultural implements, comes to us all the way from Africa. The Egyptians knew the plow before the white race was known to history. Their sense of its value is shown by their dedication of its inventor as was done in Egypt.

Deep plowing, under draining and thorough pulverization of the soil, so earnestly insisted upon of late years, were known in the east more than two thousand years ago.

#### SMALL FARMS.

Much has been said of late in favor of small farms. They are said to be conducive to general prosperity, but the small farm theory, by which a man may double the number of his acres or make one acre equal to two, a theory by which the late Horace Greeley coupled his name and fame with agriculture so honorably, is by no means new or original with him. The ancients held and advocated the self same idea. The philosophy too, of keeping the soil in good condition, was understood in the earliest dawn of history. It was known that the soil must be fed as well as fed upon.

China knew this when Britain was a wilderness and America unknown. We make mouths at the Celestials and

persecute them now, but they were far advanced in civilization, understood well the laws of fertilization, when western Europe was groping in the midnight darkness of barbarism. Gardens in China which have been cultivated, from generation to generation, for thousands of years, are still rich and fruitful.

Perhaps I cannot do better at this point, before leaving small farms, than to say a word or two upon their advantage in our case. Our people are poor, large farms are impossible to us, and what was wisdom to the ancient Romans is both wisdom and necessity to us. We can only get possession of land in small quantities and it should therefore, be our study how to make the best of the little we do get, how to make one acre count two in the matter of productiveness.

The law in the case is easily comprehended. Its chief element is time. Time is money, and whatever saves time saves labor and money, and money is only stored labor, and has only the value and purchasing power which labor gives it. Every dollar that a man lays by, represents a certain amount of labor performed and stored away, for a time of need. If his wages are a dollar a day, and he has a hundred dollars he has just one hundred days work done and stored away. If overtaken by sickness or accident he has a hundred days in which to get well, and is able to work again. The principle to be remembered is, that whatsoever saves time saves money, and whatsoever saves the needless expenditure of thought, saves ability for useful labor. Now all know, that more time and strength are required to travel two miles than one, to walk, work, dress and plow over two acres than one acre, and if we get out of one acre as much produce as out of two, we have got that and more too, for we have saved a large amount of extra time and strength.

If called upon to choose between one rich acre of ground and two poor ones, all other things being equal, I should in every instance, prefer the one acre rich to the two acres poor. We have twice as much walking, plowing and hoeing to do in the one case as in the other, while we reach only the same results.

The same reasoning applies equally well in other directions. Take for instance the trade in timber. North Carolina is not only a tar producing State, but a timber growing State. Now it takes just as many hands and just as much time to handle an inferior piece of timber as it does to handle a superior piece of timber, while you only get in exchange half as much money for the one as for the other. This idea is capable of indefinite application. It applies to every form of industry and teaches the lesson which we cannot repeat too often, that **WHAT EVER IS WORTH DOING AT ALL IS WORTH DOING WELL.** It is always better to produce a superior article and get a high price for it than an inferior one and get a low price for it. Hence also it is better to buy a good article, one that will endure longer and serve better than to buy a cheap article, which will soon wear out and constantly calls for repair when in use, which will cause you long hours of time and labor in replacing it. This applies especially to the purchase of agricultural and other implements. Then about the care of tools, much could be said here. It is fair to assume that about one-tenth of all the time of some farmers is wasted in searching for and mending tools which have been carelessly flung down anywhere and everywhere, abandoned to rust, decay and destruction.

I have seen in some of our Western States, amid the snows and rains of winter, costly plows, cultivators, mowing machines exposed to all the destructive forces of the weather. Men who farm thus bring trouble upon themselves and discredit upon agriculture and make their own lives a burden. The loss of time, labor and money by this careless style of farming is not the only evil. It is about as much of a loss of time and temper. The mental confusion which comes of this will do more damage to a man than the steadiest and heaviest strokes of well directed and even tempered exertion.

No where more than on the farm should everything be kept in its place.

A man should know just where he can put his hand on the implement he may wish at the moment to use—whether that shall be a spade, a rake or a hoe.

In speaking of what may be called the smaller economies of the farm, I want to say a word for the wood pile and the well. I think there can be no happy home, or successful farming, where the wood pile and the well are neglected. When the wife smiles and the children are cheerful and happy, the toils and burdens of the husbandman are light and easy borne. Everything therefore which tends to make home happy is in the direct line of a wise economy. Where a woman is compelled to go a half a mile in the woods in search of brush or rotten bark, to make the kettle boil, and a quarter of a mile to the spring in all weather to fetch water, it is impossible for household affairs to go on smoothly. There should always be a good supply of dry wood within easy reach of the house-keeper and a well of sweet water at the door. If these are not supplied and you come home tired and hungry from the field, if your house is not neat and in order, if the chimney smokes, if the eyes of your wife and daughters are red and their tempers unamiable, and to crown all your dinner is not ready, you have, in fact, only yourself to blame for it. With an ample quantity of sound, well seasoned wood at the door and a well of water near at hand, you have complied with primary and important conditions of peace, comfort and good order in your household.

#### A WORD OF MANURES.

I have already hinted at the necessity of feeding the soil as well as feeding ourselves. Successful farming does not entirely depend upon deep plowing and skilful hoeing, nor upon prompt attention to seed time and harvest. Every crop gathered from the field takes something valuable from the soil which should be promptly replaced, if it can be. The rich soil in the world can be made poor if in our greed, we take everything from it and give it nothing in return. While providing for ourselves, our next best thought is how to husband the resources at our command for restoring to the soil something in return for what we receive from the soil. All flesh is grass. The amount of vegetable matter we obtain from the earth is the measure of the well-being and happiness of animal life and of man's life in common with all animal life.

#### WORN OUT LANDS.

We hear a great deal about worn out lands, and of the necessity of leaving such lands and planting ourselves upon virgin soil. In our earlier history it was thought inevitable that land should wear out. This was especially so in the Southern States. The better opinion of to-day however, is that there need be no such thing as worn out land.

I have recently visited my native country and saw this opinion sustained in the State of Maryland. I was agreeably surprised to find that fields which fifty years ago were given up as hopelessly worthless, supposed to be only capable of producing sedge grass and mud, are now bearing rich harvests of wheat and corn. Since the abolition of slavery in Maryland, men from the free States have moved into my native county and by a wise application of fertilizers and a skilful cultivation, they have reclaimed and enriched the old waste places and made them blossom like the rose.

The first principle of the practical farmer should be: **Let nothing be wasted.** For nothing that will decay in the ground is useless, and nothing should be allowed to waste itself. Everything that can be should be utilized. The very soap and water employed in washing your hands and clothes should find their way to your trimly kept bed of compost. The bones from your table should be made to do double duty. The soil of England is richer and yields better crops to-day than it did two hundred years ago. They who feed the soil will themselves be fed. They who starve the soil will themselves be starved.

To be a successful farmer one must read as well as work. I cannot too strongly advise the reading of agricultural papers. They are the repositories of the best knowledge on the subject. Nobody can keep abreast with the

times without this knowledge. Muscle is important but mind is more important. In farming as elsewhere, knowledge is power. There is no work in the world which men are required to perform which they cannot perform better and more economically with education than without it. The trouble with us as a people, has been, that we have worked without a knowledge of the theory of work. We build ship but are not draftsmen, we build house but are not architects, we sail vessel but know nothing of navigation. We cast the article, but do not make the mould. Heretofore we have been simply muscle for the white man's brain. We have worked by rote, not by ingrained knowledge, by memory, not by reflection.

I am not taking blame to ourselves or reproach anybody. The fault is ours. It belongs to the unfriendly circumstances which have surrounded us in the dark past from which we are now emerging. Under the old regime we were not expected to think but to work. We were not to do as we thought, but as we were told. We were not allowed even to profit by our own experience as workmen, and use things in the easiest and best way pointed by our practical knowledge. The negro struck the blow, but the master and the overseer directed the arm. We were but human machines, operated under the lash and sting of slavery.

But let the dead past bury its dead. We live to-day under new conditions. We must now say, as Kosseth said of the bayonets of Eastern Europe, our industry must think. The reading of agricultural books and papers bring us the latest and best improvements brought to sight by thoughts and experience.

It must be no longer said of us, as in the old time, "if you want to keep a secret from a negro put it into a book or a newspaper." Every colored mechanic and farmer should take and read one or more of the papers of the day. If you cannot read yourself let your son or daughter read to you.

Depend upon it an hour spent thus, every day, will be an hour of profit and not of loss. Muscle is mighty but mind is mightier and there is no better field for its exercise than the field from which you expect to get your daily bread.

#### NATURAL ENEMIES TO THE FARMER.

I shall not stop here to enquire into the origin of evil in the world, or fix the blame upon the brow of its author. I do not know whether it was Adam, Eve or the Serpent, and for that matter I do not care. It is enough to know that we have it and have it in abundance. The business of life is to make war upon it and do the best we can to get rid of it. The farmer's life, though peaceful, is nevertheless a life of war. He has to contend with the very elements, and take advantage of them and ward off their destructive power. He has to fight an ever-recruiting army of weeds, briars and thorns, besides an army of bugs, worms and insects, of all sorts and sizes. No matter what the crop may be, there is an enemy, crawling on the earth, or flying in the air, ready to destroy it, and the husbandman must fight or die kill or be killed.

In dealing with these enemies I have to say that not an hour should be lost. They must be attacked without delay. A single day may decide the fate of your crop. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance, and the same is true of success in any trade or calling and especially is it true of successful tilling the soil. We should make war upon our enemies while they are in their eggs. No labor should be spared, no means neglected in this fight. The warrior on the battlefield uses the telescope to discover the movements of the enemy. The farmer should use the microscope to discover the manners and movements of his. With a little experience in the use of this instrument, he can in many cases anticipate his foe and strike before he is struck. He should go further than the microscope can carry him, and not only make war upon the eggs of the insects, but upon the conditions under which they are hatched into life. Like most of the ills that flesh is heir to, the farmers' enemies are overturned and fostered

[CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE.]