

FREDERICK DOUGLASS.

SOMETHING ABOUT HIS HOME LIFE AT ROCHESTER, N. Y.

How He Labored to Amplify an Education Which Was Crude, Narrow and Defective—Benefactions to His Former Master—His Intentions as to the Future

[Special Correspondence.] ROCHESTER, April 12. Frederick Douglass has thought of again making his home in Rochester, it is said, after his return from Europe. Long as he lived in Washington—some twenty years—he has never ceased calling Rochester his home, and it is here that he casts his presidential vote. It was in 1847 that he located himself and family in Rochester. He had just returned from England, where the price of his freedom had been paid in British gold—£150 the cost of the purchase of his freedom from his owner, the English abolitionist. He had been drawn to Rochester by the work already done there for the anti-slavery cause by Myron Holley. Douglass was a little over 30 years old when he settled in Rochester with his family of a wife and four children, poor man, the hero of a zealous constituency. His magnificent physique, tall, commanding figure and most gentlemanly bearing, made him a conspicuous personage in what was then a city of some 25,000 inhabitants. Outside of the circle by no means popular Abolitionist circle he was a lion to be gazed at rather than lionized. There was something in his bearing in those days as he strode through the crowded street



FREDERICK DOUGLASS. [Photo by Kent, Rochester.]

or took long gallops on horseback over the surrounding country, that reminded one of Guizot's saying: "Gentlemen, you cannot get high enough to reach the level of my contempt." He had come back from England a free man. He was slowly losing the name of "Fred Douglass, the runaway nigger." He stood at bay with the bitter prejudices of the community. The mission to which he had devoted himself—the emancipation of his people—had the sympathy of an ostracized minority. He lectured continuously. The office of The North Star, his weekly paper, was a beacon light of abolitionism. The New York Herald wondered why Rochester did not throw the nigger printing press and its editor into Lake Ontario. "You know what hard work the editor of The North Star was doing in those days—hardly ten years out of bondage—fettered by a crude and narrow education, he must educate himself, write creditably for the public and maintain his reputation as a public speaker. His home was a place of the best of housekeepers. His wife, a free woman, had done much to aid him in getting his freedom. They lived most respectably, and their children were remarkably well bred; in fact, there was an aristocratic air about the Douglass children that saved them from a world of snubbing. Foreigners of distinction came to Rochester to see Frederick Douglass, for he was then more of a curiosity than now. The event which somewhat overheated the blood of conservative Rochester was when two English ladies arrived and became members of the Douglass household, walking openly on the street with the distinguished mulatto, who on either arm as a rule, their English dress and peculiarities making them otherwise conspicuous. They were ladies of means and education, zealous Abolitionists, who had chosen to come and aid Frederick Douglass all they could. The younger of them was soon married to a prominent Abolitionist, a white man. The elder, a woman of superior literary and executive ability, brought out her sojourn in the Douglass family and office for several years, seemingly oblivious of the comments of the community. Her assistance to Frederick Douglass at his critical and laborious time of his life was to him at least invaluable. She urged him to rewrite his autobiography, which he had published in Boston in 1845, which he did, improving it greatly by additions and amplifications. The book, "My Bondage and My Freedom," still has a large sale. It was the basis of his writer's present property. He wrote it in the rambling house on the hill south of the city, the house in which John Brown, as his guest, planned the raid on Harper's Ferry and built his miniature fort. John Brown wrote out the constitution of his proposed new republic in the library of that house, taking long tramps over the hills while formulating the same. The visit was something of a bore to Douglass, but Douglass was hospitable, and, although not approving of Brown's scheme, had a respect for the old man's convictions. It was from that house Douglass barely escaped, after John Brown's arrest, when the marshals were looking for him. The old library desk bears the marks to-day of his having been broken open by his son, in answer to a secret telegram, saying that constitution from falling into the hands of the officers. It was there his daughter Annie died, not long after his flight, her illness caused by anxiety about her father. The historical old house was destroyed by fire in 1872. The locality has greatly changed since. The Douglass home stood isolated on the woody hill side. Not long before going to Europe Douglass wrote to a friend in Rochester to see what a residence in the old neighborhood could be bought for—a handsome house and grounds he would like—but he has not yet purchased. The present Mrs. Douglass is from western New York—her old home being some thirty miles from Rochester. She is a descendant of the Pitts who settled Pittsford.

A marked characteristic of Frederick Douglass is his love for music. When but a little fellow he would go up to "the great house" to hear the violin for the dancing. The fiddler, he says, did not play common airs, but the best music, and while he listened the little yellow boy under the window forgot everything else. Love of music drew him to the Methodist meetings, for the singing was music to him, and he joined in with a will. It was at these meetings he began to speak in public, and discovered how well he could talk and the pleasure in being praised for the same. When a Sunday school exhibition by the few negroes was in prospect he found a chance for exercising his budding oratory. He bought a "speaker" with the "tips" his master had given him for blacking boots, and selected a piece with a plenty of big words—a college oration wherein was expounded what man can do by imagination. The words were Greek to him, but he particularly liked rolling out: "He can soar aloft where stars glitter on the mantle of light and more effulgent sun lights up the blazes of morning."

Talking with Frederick Douglass one is sometimes inclined to think that, interesting as his autobiography is, it does not contain many of the most interesting experiences of his life, those he once thought, perhaps, insignificant to the public. On his wife's piano at Cedar Hill you may see the very same music book that he slipped into his bundle when he skipped out of Maryland. It is worth something to see him standing with

violin singing with Mrs. Douglass those old "Seraph" hymns. If you breakfast with him on a Sunday morning he will pass you with his own hand the Maryland biscuits, and is it not worth knowing that they are just like the biscuits "Miss Lucretia" used to give him when half starved he sang under her dining room window? "I used to wish I could have my fill of them, and now I mean to have, you see."

There was living in Washington a year or so ago an old colored man, who was a fellow slave with "Fred," as he still calls him. His wife was the daughter of the old fiddler of "the great house." Hearing them talk together—the recorder of the District of Columbia, and the tender of a furnace in the Capitol—laughing merrily over reminiscences of the plantation, was a unique experience. "No, I don't remember anything special that Fred used to do in those days," said the old man. Given the occasion, the gospel, and Frederick Douglass would speak to-day as powerfully as ever. The old fire is there. It flashed and flamed at a debate society of young colored men not long before he sailed for Europe. The subject under discussion was the right of women to the ballot. Douglass was expected to attend the meeting, and Douglass was a little late. The room was crowded with the colored men of Washington. The question of his leadership was proved that night. The opening of the meeting was postponed until he should come. When his white head was seen at the entrance there was spontaneous and hearty cheering. Douglass was called upon to close the debate, and it was in his summary of the question, his defense of woman's right to the ballot, that he was led into reminiscences of the old conflict for his race—and the Douglass of anti-slavery days was back again.

The reports circulated that Frederick Douglass is worth at least \$300,000 are without foundation. He is perhaps worth nearly one-third of that sum. His mail is overladen with letters begging—yes, in some cases demanding assistance. "I helped free your people," is a fair way to show their poverty, is the key note of many. If Douglass is independent, his children are not. Writing is hard work for Douglass, owing to his partially crippled right hand, but in a mob in Indian Territory he has answered many of the begging letters, and most kindly.

JANE MARSH PARKER.

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Also part of the west half of said quarter section, beginning at the northwest corner of said quarter section; thence south 12 rods; thence along an old ditch south 87 1/2 degrees east 18 rods; thence along the center of an irrigation ditch north 64 degrees east 45 rods; thence along ditch bank and brush fence south 69 degrees (E.T.) 25.5 rods to the southeast corner of said quarter section; thence north 22 1/2 rods to a ditch on the east boundary of said quarter section 25.5 rods; thence north 54 degrees west 20.4 rods; thence north 54 degrees west 25 rods to the north boundary of said quarter section; thence west along the north boundary of said quarter section 25.5 rods to the place of beginning; containing 6.92 acres.

Also, beginning in the center of a four-rod street south 1/2 rods, and south 80 1/2 degrees west 14 rods, more or less, from the southeast corner of Carson & Burzo's survey on the southeast corner of section 25, T. 28, N. E. W., under the name of "30.5 rods and north 34 1/2 rods from the southeast corner southeast quarter of said section 25; thence south 84 degrees east 21.8 rods to center of three-rod street; thence on center line of said street north 11 1/2 rods to center of four-rod street east and west; thence on center line of said street south 80 1/2 degrees west 15 rods to the place of beginning; containing 1.38 acres of ground.

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