Project Gutenberg's Frederick Douglass, by Charles Waddell Chesnutt

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A Biography

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[Illustration]

FREDERICK DOUGLASS 1899

Charles Chesnutt

The Beacon biographies of eminent Americans. Includes bibliographical

references (p.).

Preface

Frederick Douglass lived so long, and played so conspicuous a part on

the world's stage, that it would be impossible, in a work of the

size of this, to do more than touch upon the salient features of his

career, to suggest the respects in which he influenced the course of

events in his lifetime, and to epitomize for the readers of another

generation the judgment of his contemporaries as to his genius and his

character.

Douglass's fame as an orator has long been secure. His position as the

champion of an oppressed race, and at the same time an example of its

possibilities, was, in his own generation, as picturesque as it

was unique; and his life may serve for all time as an incentive

to aspiring souls who would fight the battles and win the love of

mankind. The average American of to-day who sees, when his attention

is called to it, and deplores, if he be a thoughtful and just man,

the deep undertow of race prejudice that retards the progress of the

colored people of our own generation, cannot, except by reading the

painful records of the past, conceive of the mental and spiritual

darkness to which slavery, as the inexorable condition of its

existence, condemned its victims and, in a less measure, their

oppressors, or of the blank wall of proscription and scorn by which

free people of color were shut up in a moral and social Ghetto, the

gates of which have yet not been entirely torn down.

From this night of slavery Douglass emerged, passed through the limbo

of prejudice which he encountered as a freeman, and took his place in

history. "As few of the world's great men have ever had so checkered

and diversified a career," says Henry Wilson, "so it may at least be

plausibly claimed that no man represents in himself more conflicting

ideas and interests. His life is, in itself, an epic which finds few

to equal it in the realms of either romance or reality." It was, after

all, no misfortune for humanity that Frederick Douglass felt the iron

hand of slavery; for his genius changed the drawbacks of color and

condition into levers by which he raised himself and his people.

The materials for this work have been near at hand, though there is

a vast amount of which lack of space must prevent the use.

Acknowledgment is here made to members of the Douglass family for aid

in securing the photograph from which the frontispiece is reproduced.

The more the writer has studied the records of Douglass's life, the

more it has appealed to his imagination and his heart. He can claim no

special qualification for this task, unless perhaps it be a profound

and in some degree a personal sympathy with every step of Douglass's

upward career. Belonging to a later generation, he was only

privileged to see the man and hear the orator after his life-work was

substantially completed, but often enough then to appreciate

something of the strength and eloquence by which he impressed his

contemporaries. If by this brief sketch the writer can revive among

the readers of another generation a tithe of the interest that

Douglass created for himself when he led the forlorn hope of his race

for freedom and opportunity, his labor will be amply repaid.

Charles W. Chesnutt

Cleveland, October, 1899

CHRONOLOGY

1817

Frederick Douglass was born at Tuckahoe, near Easton, Talbot County,

Maryland.

1825

Was sent to Baltimore to live with a relative of his master.

1833

\_March.\_ Was taken to St. Michaels, Maryland, to live again with his

master.

1834

\_January.\_ Was sent to live with Edward Covey, slave-breaker, with

whom he spent the year.

1835-36

Hired to William Freeland. Made an unsuccessful attempt to escape from

slavery, Was sent to Baltimore to learn the ship-calkers trade.

1838

\_May\_. Hired his own time and worked at his trade.

\_September 3\_. Escaped from slavery and went to New York City. Married

Miss Anna Murray. Went to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Assumed the name

of "Douglass."

1841

Attended anti-slavery convention at New Bedford and addressed the

meeting. Was employed as agent of the Massachusetts Anti-slavery

Society.

1842

Took part in Rhode Island campaign against the Dorr constitution.

Lectured on slavery. Moved to Lynn, Massachusetts.

1843

Took part in the famous "One Hundred Conventions" of the New England

Anti-slavery Society.

1844

Lectured with Pillsbury, Foster, and others.

1845

Published \_Frederick Douglass's Narrative\_.

1845-46

Visited Great Britain and Ireland. Remained in Europe two years,

lecturing on slavery and other subjects. Was presented by English

friends with money to purchase his freedom and to establish a

newspaper.

1847

Returned to the United States. Moved with his family to Rochester, New

York. Established the \_North Star\_, subsequently renamed \_Frederick

Douglass's Paper\_. Visited John Brown at Springfield, Massachusetts.

1848

Lectured on slavery and woman suffrage.

1849

Edited newspaper. Lectured against slavery. Assisted the escape of

fugitive slaves.

1850

\_May 7.\_ Attended meeting of Anti-slavery Society at New York City.

Running debate with Captain Rynders.

1852

Supported the Free Soil party. Elected delegate from Rochester to Free

Soil convention at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Supported John P. Hale for

the Presidency.

1853

Visited Harriet Beecher Stowe at Andover, Massachusetts, with

reference to industrial school for colored youth.

1854

Opposed repeal of Missouri Compromise.

\_June 12.\_ Delivered commencement address at Western Reserve College,

Hudson, Ohio.

1855

Published \_My Bondage and My Freedom\_. \_March\_. Addressed the New York

legislature.

1856

Supported Fremont, candidate of the Republican party.

1858

Established \_Douglass's Monthly\_. Entertained John Brown at Rochester.

1859

\_August 20\_. Visited John Brown at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

\_May 12 [October].\_ Went to Canada to avoid arrest for alleged

complicity in the John Brown raid.

\_November 12.\_ Sailed from Quebec for England.

Lectured and spoke in England and Scotland for six months.

1860

Returned to the United States. Supported Lincoln for the Presidency.

1862

Lectured and spoke in favor of the war and against slavery.

1863

Assisted in recruiting Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts

colored regiments. Invited to visit President Lincoln.

1864

Supported Lincoln for re-election.

1866

Was active in procuring the franchise for the freedmen.

\_September.\_ Elected delegate from Rochester to National Loyalists'

Convention at Philadelphia.

1869 [1870]

Moved to Washington, District of Columbia. Established [Edited and

then bought] the \_New National Era\_.

1870

Appointed secretary of the Santo Domingo Commission by President

Grant.

1872

Appointed councillor of the District of Columbia. [Moved family there

after a fire (probably arson) destroyed their Rochester home and

Douglass's newspaper files.] Elected presidential elector of the State

of New York, and chosen by the electoral college to take the vote to

Washington.

1876

Delivered address at unveiling of Lincoln statue at Washington.

1877

Appointed Marshal of the District of Columbia by President Hayes.

1878

Visited his old home in Maryland and met his old master.

1879

Bust of Douglass placed in Sibley Hall, of Rochester University. Spoke

against the proposed negro exodus from the South.

1881

Appointed recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia.

1882

\_January.\_ Published \_Life and Times of Frederick Douglass\_, the third

and last of his autobiographies. \_August 4.\_ Mrs. Frederick Douglass

died.

1884

\_February 6.\_ Attended funeral of Wendell Phillips. \_February 9.\_

Attended memorial meeting and delivered eulogy on Phillips. Married

Miss Helen Pitts.

1886

\_May 20.\_ Lectured on John Brown at Music Hall, Boston.

\_September 11.\_ Attended a dinner given in his honor by the Wendell

Phillips Club, Boston.

\_September.\_ Sailed for Europe.

Visited Great Britain, France, Italy, Greece, and Egypt, 1886-87.

1888

Made a tour of the Southern States.

1889

Appointed United States minister resident and consul-general to the

Republic of Hayti and \_chargé d'affaires\_ to Santo Domingo.

1890

\_September 22.\_ Addressed abolition reunion at Boston.

1891

Resigned the office of minister to Hayti.

1893

Acted as commissioner for Hayti at World's Columbian Exposition.

1895

\_February 20.\_ Frederick Douglass died at his home on Anacostia

Heights, near Washington, District of Columbia.

In a few places in the text of \_Frederick Douglass\_, bracketed words

have been inserted to indicate possible typographical errors, other

unclear or misleading passages in the 1899 original edition, and

identifications that were not needed in 1899 but may be needed in the

twenty-first century.

I.

If it be no small task for a man of the most favored antecedents and

the most fortunate surroundings to rise above mediocrity in a great

nation, it is surely a more remarkable achievement for a man of the

very humblest origin possible to humanity in any country in any age of

the world, in the face of obstacles seemingly insurmountable, to win

high honors and rewards, to retain for more than a generation the

respect of good men in many lands, and to be deemed worthy of

enrolment among his country's great men. Such a man was Frederick

Douglass, and the example of one who thus rose to eminence by sheer

force of character and talents that neither slavery nor caste

proscription could crush must ever remain as a shining illustration

of the essential superiority of manhood to environment. Circumstances

made Frederick Douglass a slave, but they could not prevent him from

becoming a freeman and a leader among mankind.

The early life of Douglass, as detailed by himself from the platform

in vigorous and eloquent speech, and as recorded in the three volumes

written by himself at different periods of his career, is perhaps the

completest indictment of the slave system ever presented at the bar of

public opinion. Fanny Kemble's \_Journal of a Residence on a Georgian

Plantation\_, kept by her in the very year of Douglass's escape from

bondage, but not published until 1863, too late to contribute anything

to the downfall of slavery, is a singularly clear revelation of

plantation life from the standpoint of an outsider entirely unbiased

by American prejudice. \_Frederick Douglass's Narrative\_ is the same

story told from the inside. They coincide in the main facts; and in

the matter of detail, like the two slightly differing views of a

stereoscopic picture, they bring out into bold relief the real

character of the peculiar institution. \_Uncle Tom's Cabin\_ lent to

the structure of fact the decorations of humor, a dramatic plot, and

characters to whose fate the touch of creative genius gave a living

interest. But, after all, it was not Uncle Tom, nor Topsy, nor Miss

Ophelia, nor Eliza, nor little Eva that made the book the power it

proved to stir the hearts of men, but the great underlying tragedy

then already rapidly approaching a bloody climax.

Frederick Douglass was born in February, l8l7,--as nearly as the date

could be determined in after years, when it became a matter of public

interest,--at Tuckahoe, near Easton, Talbot County, on the eastern

shore of Maryland, a barren and poverty-stricken district, which

possesses in the birth of Douglass its sole title to distinction. His

mother was a negro slave, tall, erect, and well-proportioned, of a

deep black and glossy complexion, with regular features, and manners

of a natural dignity and sedateness. Though a field hand and compelled

to toil many hours a day, she had in some mysterious way learned to

read, being the only person of color in Tuckahoe, slave or free, who

possessed that accomplishment. His father was a white man. It was in

the nature of things that in after years attempts should be made to

analyze the sources of Douglass's talent, and that the question should

be raised whether he owed it to the black or the white half of his

mixed ancestry. But Douglass himself, who knew his own mother and

grandmother, ascribed such powers as he possessed to the negro half of

his blood; and, as to it certainly he owed the experience which gave

his anti-slavery work its peculiar distinction and value, he doubtless

believed it only fair that the credit for what he accomplished should

go to those who needed it most and could justly be proud of it. He

never knew with certainty who his white father was, for the exigencies

of slavery separated the boy from his mother before the subject of

his paternity became of interest to him; and in after years his white

father never claimed the honor, which might have given him a place in

history.

Douglass's earliest recollections centered around the cabin of his

grandmother, Betsey Bailey, who seems to have been something of a

privileged character on the plantation, being permitted to live with

her husband, Isaac, in a cabin of their own, charged with only the

relatively light duty of looking after a number of young children,

mostly the offspring of her own five daughters, and providing for her

own support.

It is impossible in a work of the scope of this to go into very

elaborate detail with reference to this period of Douglass's life,

however interesting it might be. The real importance of his life to us

of another generation lies in what he accomplished toward the world's

progress, which he only began to influence several years after his

escape from slavery. Enough ought to be stated, however, to trace

his development from slave to freeman, and his preparation for the

platform where he secured his hearing and earned his fame.

Douglass was born the slave of one Captain Aaron Anthony, a man of

some consequence in eastern Maryland, the manager or chief clerk of

one Colonel Lloyd, the head for that generation of an old, exceedingly

wealthy, and highly honored family in Maryland, the possessor of a

stately mansion and one of the largest and most fertile plantations in

the State. Captain Anthony, though only the satellite of this great

man, himself owned several farms and a number of slaves. At the age of

seven Douglass was taken from the cabin of his grandmother at Tuckahoe

to his masters residence on Colonel Lloyd's plantation.

Up to this time he had never, to his recollection, seen his mother.

All his impressions of her were derived from a few brief visits made

to him at Colonel Lloyd's plantation, most of them at night. These

fleeting visits of the mother were important events in the life of the

child, now no longer under the care of his grandmother, but turned

over to the tender mercies of his master's cook, with whom he does not

seem to have been a favorite. His mother died when he was eight or

nine years old. Her son did not see her during her illness, nor learn

of it until after her death. It was always a matter of grief to him

that he did not know her better, and that he could not was one of the

sins of slavery that he never forgave.

On Colonel Lloyd's plantation Douglass spent four years of the slave

life of which his graphic description on the platform stirred humane

hearts to righteous judgment of an unrighteous institution. It is

enough to say that this lad, with keen eyes and susceptible feelings,

was an eye-witness of all the evils to which slavery gave birth. Its

extremes of luxury and misery could be found within the limits of one

estate. He saw the field hand driven forth at dawn to labor until

dark. He beheld every natural affection crushed when inconsistent with

slavery, or warped and distorted to fit the necessities and promote

the interests of the institution. He heard the unmerited strokes of

the lash on the backs of others, and felt them on his own. In the wild

songs of the slaves he read, beneath their senseless jargon or their

fulsome praise of "old master," the often unconscious note of grief

and despair. He perceived, too, the debasing effects of slavery upon

master and slave alike, crushing all semblance of manhood in the

one, and in the other substituting passion for judgment, caprice for

justice, and indolence and effeminacy for the more virile virtues of

freemen. Doubtless the gentle hand of time will some time spread

the veil of silence over this painful past; but, while we are still

gathering its evil aftermath, it is well enough that we do not forget

the origin of so many of our civic problems.

When Douglass was ten years old, he was sent from the Lloyd plantation

to Baltimore, to live with one Hugh Auld, a relative of his master.

Here he enjoyed the high privilege, for a slave, of living in the

house with his master's family. In the capacity of house boy it was

his duty to run errands and take care of a little white boy, Tommy

Auld, the son of his mistress for the time being, Mrs. Sophia Auld.

Mrs. Auld was of a religious turn of mind; and, from hearing her

reading the Bible aloud frequently, curiosity prompted the boy to ask

her to teach him to read. She complied, and found him an apt pupil,

until her husband learned of her unlawful and dangerous conduct, and

put an end to the instruction. But the evil was already done, and the

seed thus sown brought forth fruit in the after career of the orator

and leader of men. The mere fact that his master wished to prevent his

learning made him all the more eager to acquire knowledge. In after

years, even when most bitter in his denunciation of the palpable evils

of slavery, Douglass always acknowledged the debt he owed to this good

lady who innocently broke the laws and at the same time broke the

chains that held a mind in bondage.

Douglass lived in the family of Hugh Auld at Baltimore for seven

years. During this time the achievement that had the greatest

influence upon his future was his learning to read and write. His

mistress had given him a start. His own efforts gained the rest. He

carried in his pocket a blue-backed \_Webster's Spelling Book\_, and, as

occasion offered, induced his young white playmates, by the bribes

of childhood, to give him lessons in spelling. When he was about

thirteen, he began to feel deeply the moral yoke of slavery and to

seek for knowledge of the means to escape it. One book seems to have

had a marked influence upon his life at this epoch. He obtained,

somehow, a copy of \_The Columbian Orator\_, containing some of the

choicest masterpieces of English oratory, in which he saw liberty

praised and oppression condemned; and the glowing periods of Pitt and

Fox and Sheridan and our own Patrick Henry stirred to life in the

heart of this slave boy the genius for oratory which did not burst

forth until years afterward. The worldly wisdom of denying to slaves

the key to knowledge is apparent when it is said that Douglass first

learned from a newspaper that there were such people as abolitionists,

who were opposed to human bondage and sought to make all men free.

At about this same period Douglass's mind fell under religious

influences. He was converted, professed faith in Jesus Christ, and

began to read the Bible. He had dreamed of liberty before; he now

prayed for it, and trusted in God. But, with the shrewd common sense

which marked his whole life and saved it from shipwreck in more

than one instance, he never forgot that God helps them that help

themselves, and so never missed an opportunity to acquire the

knowledge that would prepare him for freedom and give him the means of

escape from slavery.

Douglass had learned to read, partly from childish curiosity and the

desire to be able to do what others around him did; but it was with a

definite end in view that he learned to write. By the slave code

it was unlawful for a slave to go beyond the limits of his own

neighborhood without the written permission of his master. Douglass's

desire to write grew mainly out of the fact that in order to escape

from bondage, which he had early determined to do, he would probably

need such a "pass," as this written permission was termed, and could

write it himself if he but knew how. His master for the time being

kept a ship-yard, and in this and neighboring establishments of

the same kind the boy spent much of his time. He noticed that the

carpenters, after dressing pieces of timber, marked them with certain

letters to indicate their positions in the vessel. By asking questions

of the workmen he learned the names of these letters and their

significance. He got up writing matches with sticks upon the ground

with the little white boys, copied the italics in his spelling-book,

and in the secrecy of the attic filled up all the blank spaces of his

young master's old copy-books. In time he learned to write, and thus

again demonstrated the power of the mind to overleap the bounds that

men set for it and work out the destiny to which God designs it.

II.

It was the curious fate of Douglass to pass through almost every phase

of slavery, as though to prepare him the more thoroughly for his

future career. Shortly after he went to Baltimore, his master, Captain

Anthony, died intestate, and his property was divided between his two

children. Douglass, with the other slaves, was part of the personal

estate, and was sent for to be appraised and disposed of in the

division. He fell to the share of Mrs. Lucretia Auld, his masters

daughter, who sent him back to Baltimore, where, after a month's

absence, he resumed his life in the household of Mrs. Hugh Auld,

the sister-in-law of his legal mistress. Owing to a family

misunderstanding, he was taken, in March, 1833, from Baltimore back to

St. Michaels.

His mistress, Lucretia Auld, had died in the mean time; and the new

household in which he found himself, with Thomas Auld and his second

wife, Rowena, at its head, was distinctly less favorable to the slave

boy's comfort than the home where he had lived in Baltimore. Here he

saw hardships of the life in bondage that had been less apparent in a

large city. It is to be feared that Douglass was not the ideal slave,

governed by the meek and lowly spirit of Uncle Tom. He seems, by his

own showing, to have manifested but little appreciation of the wise

oversight, the thoughtful care, and the freedom from responsibility

with which slavery claimed to hedge round its victims, and he was

inclined to spurn the rod rather than to kiss it. A tendency to

insubordination, due partly to the freer life he had led in Baltimore,

got him into disfavor with a master easily displeased; and, not

proving sufficiently amenable to the discipline of the home

plantation, he was sent to a certain celebrated negro-breaker by the

name of Edward Covey, one of the poorer whites who, as overseers and

slave-catchers, and in similar unsavory capacities, earned a living as

parasites on the system of slavery. Douglass spent a year under Coveys

ministrations, and his life there may be summed up in his own words:

"I had neither sufficient time in which to eat nor to sleep, except on

Sundays. The overwork and the brutal chastisements of which I was the

victim, combined with that ever-gnawing and soul-destroying thought,

'I am a slave,--a slave for life,' rendered me a living embodiment of

mental and physical wretchedness."

But even all this did not entirely crush the indomitable spirit of a

man destined to achieve his own freedom and thereafter to help win

freedom for a race. In August, 1834, after a particularly atrocious

beating, which left him wounded and weak from loss of blood, Douglass

escaped the vigilance of the slave-breaker and made his way back to

his own master to seek protection. The master, who would have lost

his slave's wages for a year if he had broken the contract with

Covey before the year's end, sent Douglass back to his taskmaster.

Anticipating the most direful consequences, Douglass made the

desperate resolution to resist any further punishment at Covey's

hands. After a fight of two hours Covey gave up his attempt to whip

Frederick, and thenceforth laid hands on him no more. That Covey did

not invoke the law, which made death the punishment of the slave who

resisted his master, was probably due to shame at having been worsted

by a negro boy, or to the prudent consideration that there was no

profit to be derived from a dead negro. Strength of character,

re-enforced by strength of muscle, thus won a victory over brute force

that secured for Douglass comparative immunity from abuse during the

remaining months of his year's service with Covey.

The next year, 1835, Douglass was hired out to a Mr. William Freeland,

who lived near St. Michael's, a gentleman who did not forget justice

or humanity, so far as they were consistent with slavery, even

in dealing with bond-servants. Here Douglass led a comparatively

comfortable life. He had enough to eat, was not overworked, and found

the time to conduct a surreptitious Sunday-school, where he tried to

help others by teaching his fellow-slaves to read the Bible.

III.

The manner of Douglass's escape from Maryland was never publicly

disclosed by him until the war had made slavery a memory and

the slave-catcher a thing of the past. It was the theory of the

anti-slavery workers of the time that the publication of the details

of escapes or rescues from bondage seldom reached the ears of those

who might have learned thereby to do likewise, but merely furnished

the master class with information that would render other escapes

more difficult and bring suspicion or punishment upon those who had

assisted fugitives. That this was no idle fear there is abundant

testimony in the annals of the period. But in later years, when there

was no longer any danger of unpleasant consequences, and when it had

become an honor rather than a disgrace to have assisted a distressed

runaway, Douglass published in detail the story of his flight. It

would not compare in dramatic interest with many other celebrated

escapes from slavery or imprisonment. He simply masqueraded as a

sailor, borrowed a sailors "protection," or certificate that he

belonged to the navy, took the train to Baltimore in the evening, and

rode in the negro car until he reached New York City. There were many

anxious moments during this journey. The "protection" he carried

described a man somewhat different from him, but the conductor did not

examine it carefully. Fear clutched at the fugitive's heart whenever

he neared a State border line. He saw several persons whom he knew;

but, if they recognized him or suspected his purpose, they made no

sign. A little boldness, a little address, and a great deal of good

luck carried him safely to his journey's end.

Douglass arrived in New York on September 4, 1838, having attained

only a few months before what would have been in a freeman his legal

majority. But, though landed in a free State, he was by no means a

free man. He was still a piece of property, and could be reclaimed

by the law's aid if his whereabouts were discovered. While local

sentiment at the North afforded a measure of protection to fugitives,

and few were ever returned to bondage compared with the number that

escaped, yet the fear of recapture was ever with them, darkening their

lives and impeding their pursuit of happiness.

But even the partial freedom Douglass had achieved gave birth to a

thousand delightful sensations. In his autobiography he describes this

dawn of liberty thus:

"A new world had opened up to me. I lived more in one day than in a

year of my slave life. I felt as one might feel upon escape from a den

of hungry lions. My chains were broken, and the victory brought me

unspeakable joy."

But one cannot live long on joy; and, while his chains were broken,

he was not beyond the echo of their clanking. He met on the streets,

within a few hours after his arrival in New York, a man of his own

color, who informed him that New York was full of Southerners at that

season of the year, and that slave-hunters and spies were numerous,

that old residents of the city were not safe, and that any recent

fugitive was in imminent danger. After this cheerful communication

Douglass's informant left him, evidently fearing that Douglass himself

might be a slave-hunting spy. There were negroes base enough to play

this role. In a sailor whom he encountered he found a friend. This

Good Samaritan took him home for the night, and accompanied him next

day to a Mr. David Ruggles, a colored man, the secretary of the New

York Vigilance Committee and an active antislavery worker. Mr. Ruggles

kept him concealed for several days, during which time the woman

Douglass loved, a free woman, came on from Baltimore; and they were

married. He had no money in his pocket, and nothing to depend upon but

his hands, which doubtless seemed to him quite a valuable possession,

as he knew they had brought in an income of several hundred dollars a

year to their former owner.

Douglass's new friends advised him to go to New Bedford,

Massachusetts, where whaling fleets were fitted out, and where he

might hope to find work at his trade of ship-calker. It was believed,

too, that he would be safer there, as the anti-slavery sentiment was

considered too strong to permit a fugitive slave's being returned to

the South.

When Douglass, accompanied by his wife, arrived in New Bedford, a

Mr. Nathan Johnson, a colored man to whom he had been recommended,

received him kindly, gave him shelter and sympathy, and lent him a

small sum of money to redeem his meagre baggage, which had been held

by the stage-driver as security for an unpaid balance of the fare to

New Bedford. In his autobiography Douglass commends Mr. Johnson for

his "noble-hearted hospitality and manly character."

In New York Douglass had changed his name in order the better to hide

his identity from any possible pursuer. Douglass's name was another

tie that bound him to his race. He has been called "Douglass" by the

writer because that was the name he took for himself, as he did his

education and his freedom; and as "Douglass" he made himself famous.

As a slave, he was legally entitled to but one name,--Frederick. From

his grandfather, Isaac Bailey, a freeman, he had derived the surname

Bailey. His mother, with unconscious sarcasm, had called the little

slave boy Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey. The bearer of this

imposing string of appellations had, with a finer sense of fitness,

cut it down to Frederick Bailey. In New York he had called himself

Frederick Johnson; but, finding when he reached New Bedford that a

considerable portion of the colored population of the city already

rejoiced in this familiar designation, he fell in with the suggestion

of his host, who had been reading Scott's \_Lady of the Lake\_,

and traced an analogy between the runaway slave and the fugitive

chieftain, that the new freeman should call himself Douglass,

after the noble Scot of that name [Douglas]. The choice proved not

inappropriate, for this modern Douglass fought as valiantly in his own

cause and with his own weapons as ever any Douglass [Douglas] fought

with flashing steel in border foray.

Here, then, in a New England town, Douglass began the life of a

freeman, from which, relieved now of the incubus of slavery, he soon

emerged into the career for which, in the providence of God, he seemed

by his multiform experience to have been especially fitted. He did not

find himself, even in Massachusetts, quite beyond the influence of

slavery. While before the law of the State he was the equal of any

other man, caste prejudice prevented him from finding work at his

trade of calker; and he therefore sought employment as a laborer. This

he found easily, and for three years worked at whatever his hands

found to do. The hardest toil was easy to him, the heaviest burdens

were light; for the money that he earned went into his own pocket.

If it did not remain there long, he at least had the satisfaction of

spending it and of enjoying what it purchased.

During these three years he was learning the lesson of liberty and

unconsciously continuing his training for the work of an anti-slavery

agitator. He became a subscriber to the \_Liberator\_, each number of

which he devoured with eagerness. He heard William Lloyd Garrison

lecture, and became one of his most devoted disciples. He attended

every anti-slavery meeting in New Bedford, and now and then spoke on

the subject of slavery in humble gatherings of his own people.

IV

In 1841 Douglass entered upon that epoch of his life which brought the

hitherto obscure refugee prominently before the public, and in which

his services as anti-slavery orator and reformer constitute his chief

claim to enduring recollection. Millions of negroes whose lives had

been far less bright than Douglass's had lived and died in slavery.

Thousands of fugitives under assumed names were winning a precarious

livelihood in the free States and trembling in constant fear of the

slave-catcher. Some of these were doing noble work in assisting others

to escape from bondage. Mr. Siebert, in his \_Underground Railroad\_,

mentions one fugitive slave, John Mason by name, who assisted thirteen

hundred others to escape from Kentucky. Another picturesque fugitive

was Harriet Tubman, who devoted her life to this work with a courage,

skill, and success that won her a wide reputation among the friends

of freedom. A number of free colored men in the North, a few of them

wealthy and cultivated, lent their time and their means to this cause.

But it was reserved for Douglass, by virtue of his marvellous gift of

oratory, to become pre-eminently the personal representative of his

people for a generation.

In 1841 the Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society, which had been for

some little time weakened by faction, arranged its differences, and

entered upon a campaign of unusual activity, which found expression in

numerous meetings throughout the free States, mainly in New

England. On August 15 of that year a meeting was held at Nantucket,

Massachusetts. The meeting was conducted by John A. Collins, at that

time general agent of the society, and was addressed by William Lloyd

Garrison and other leading abolitionists. Douglass had taken a holiday

and come from New Bedford to attend this convention, without the

remotest thought of taking part except as a spectator. The proceedings

were interesting, and aroused the audience to a high state of feeling.

There was present in the meeting a certain abolitionist, by name

William C. Coffin, who had heard Douglass speak in the little negro

Sunday-school at New Bedford, and who knew of his recent escape from

slavery. To him came the happy inspiration to ask Douglass to speak

a few words to the convention by way of personal testimony. Collins

introduced the speaker as "a graduate from slavery, with his diploma

written upon his back."

Douglass himself speaks very modestly about this, his first public

appearance. He seems, from his own account, to have suffered somewhat

from stage fright, which was apparently his chief memory concerning

it. The impressions of others, however, allowing a little for the

enthusiasm of the moment, are a safer guide as to the effect of

Douglass's first speech. Parker Pillsbury reported that, "though it

was late in the evening when the young man closed his remarks, none

seemed to know or care for the hour.... The crowded congregation had

been wrought up almost to enchantment during the whole long evening,

particularly by some of the utterances of the last speaker [Douglass],

as he turned over the terrible apocalypse of his experience in

slavery." Mr. Garrison bore testimony to "the extraordinary emotion it

exerted on his own mind and to the powerful impression it exerted upon

a crowded auditory." "Patrick Henry," he declared, "had never made a

more eloquent speech than the one they had just listened to from the

lips of the hunted fugitive." Upon Douglass and his speech as a text

Mr. Garrison delivered one of the sublimest and most masterly efforts

of his life; and then and there began the friendship between the

fugitive slave and the great agitator which opened the door

for Douglass to a life of noble usefulness, and secured to the

anti-slavery cause one of its most brilliant and effective orators.

At Garrison's instance Collins offered Douglass employment as lecturer

for the Anti-slavery Society, though the idea of thus engaging him

doubtless occurred to more than one of the abolition leaders who heard

his Nantucket speech. Douglass was distrustful of his own powers. Only

three years out of slavery, with little learning and no experience

as a public speaker, painfully aware of the prejudice which must be

encountered by men of his color, fearful too of the publicity that

might reveal his whereabouts to his legal owner, who might reclaim his

property wherever found, he yielded only reluctantly to Mr. Collins's

proposition, and agreed at first upon only a three months' term of

service.

Most of the abolitionists were, or meant to be, consistent in their

practice of what they preached; and so, when Douglass was enrolled as

one of the little band of apostles, they treated him literally as a

man and a brother. Their homes, their hearts, and their often none too

well-filled purses were open to him. In this new atmosphere his mind

expanded, his spirit took on high courage, and he read and studied

diligently, that he might make himself worthy of his opportunity to do

something for his people.

During the remainder of 1841 Douglass travelled and lectured in

Eastern Massachusetts with George Foster, in the interest of the

two leading abolition journals, the \_Anti-slavery Standard\_ and the

\_Liberator\_, and also lectured in Rhode Island against the proposed

Dorr constitution, which sought to limit the right of suffrage to

white male citizens only, thus disfranchising colored men who had

theretofore voted. With Foster and Pillsbury and Parker[1] and

Monroe[2] and Abby Kelly [Kelley][3] he labored to defeat the Dorr

constitution and at the same time promote the abolition gospel. The

proposed constitution was defeated, and colored men who could meet the

Rhode Island property qualification were left in possession of the

right to vote.

[Footnote 1: Editor's Note to Dover Edition: Reverend Theodore Parker

(1810-1860) was a Unitarian minister who graduated from the Harvard

Divinity School and was active in the Boston area.]

[Footnote 2: Editor's Note to Dover Edition: James Monroe (1821-1898),

a New Englander with a Quaker mother; in 1839 he became an

Abolitionist lecturer instead of enrolling in college.]

[Footnote 3: Editor's Note to Dover Edition: Abigail Kelley Foster

(1811-1887), who married another Abolitionist, Stephen Foster, in

1845, was a Quaker orator and organizer on behalf of the abolition of

slavery and for women's right to vote.]

Douglass had plunged into this new work, after the first embarrassment

wore off, with all the enthusiasm of youth and hope. But, except among

the little band of Garrisonians and their sympathizers, his position

did not relieve him from the disabilities attaching to his color.

The feeling toward the negro in New England in 1841 was but little

different from that in the State of Georgia to-day. Men of color were

regarded and treated as belonging to a distinctly inferior order of

creation. At hotels and places of public resort they were refused

entertainment. On railroads and steamboats they were herded off by

themselves in mean and uncomfortable cars. If welcomed in churches

at all, they were carefully restricted to the negro pew. As in the

Southern States to-day, no distinction was made among them in these

respects by virtue of dress or manners or culture or means; but all

were alike discriminated against because of their dark skins. Some

of Douglass's abolition friends, among whom he especially mentions

Wendell Phillips and two others of lesser note, won their way to his

heart by at all times refusing to accept privileges that were denied

to their swarthy companion. Douglass resented proscription wherever

met with, and resisted it with force when the odds were not too

overwhelming. More than once he was beaten and maltreated by railroad

conductors and brakemen. For a time the Eastern Railroad ran its cars

through Lynn, Massachusetts, without stopping, because Douglass, who

resided at that time in Lynn, insisted on riding in the white people's

car, and made trouble when interfered with. Often it was impossible

for the abolitionists to secure a meeting-place; and in several

instances Douglass paraded the streets with a bell, like a town crier,

to announce that he would lecture in the open air.

Some of Douglass's friends, it must be admitted, were at times rather

extreme in their language, and perhaps stirred up feelings that a

more temperate vocabulary would not have aroused. None of them ever

hesitated to call a spade a spade, and some of them denounced slavery

and all its sympathizers with the vigor and picturesqueness of a

Muggletonian or Fifth Monarchy man of Cromwell's time execrating his

religious adversaries. And, while it was true enough that the Church

and the State were, generally speaking, the obsequious tools of

slavery, it was not easy for an abolitionist to say so in vehement

language without incurring the charge of treason or blasphemy,--an old

trick of bigotry and tyranny to curb freedom of thought and freedom of

speech. The little personal idiosyncrasies which some of the reformers

affected, such as long hair in the men and short hair in the

women,--there is surely some psychological reason why reformers run

to such things,--served as convenient excuses for gibes and unseemly

interruptions at their public meetings. On one memorable occasion,

at Syracuse, New York, in November, 1842, Douglass and his fellows

narrowly escaped tar and feathers. But, although Douglass was

vehemently denunciatory of slavery in all its aspects, his twenty

years of training in that hard school had developed in him a vein of

prudence that saved him from these verbal excesses,--perhaps there was

also some element of taste involved,--and thus made his arguments more

effective than if he had alienated his audiences by indiscriminate

attacks on all the institutions of society. No one could justly

accuse Frederick Douglass of cowardice or self-seeking; yet he was

opportunist enough to sacrifice the immaterial for the essential, and

to use the best means at hand to promote the ultimate object sought,

although the means thus offered might not be the ideal instrument. It

was doubtless this trait that led Douglass, after he separated from

his abolitionist friends, to modify his views upon the subject

of disunion and the constitutionality of slavery, and to support

political parties whose platforms by no means expressed the full

measure of his convictions.

In 1843 the New England Anti-slavery Society resolved, at its annual

meeting in the spring, to stir the Northern heart and rouse the

national conscience by a series of one hundred conventions in New

Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania.

Douglass was assigned as one of the agents for the conduct of this

undertaking. Among those associated in this work, which extended over

five months, were John A. Collins, the president of the society, who

mapped out the campaign; James Monroe; George Bradburn; William A.

White; Charles L. Remond, a colored orator, born in Massachusetts, who

rendered effective service in the abolition cause; and Sidney Howard

Gay, at that time managing editor of the \_National Anti-slavery

Standard\_ and later of the New York \_Tribune\_ and the New York

\_Evening Post.\_

The campaign upon which this little band of missionaries set out was

no inconsiderable one. They were not going forth to face enthusiastic

crowds of supporters, who would meet them with brass bands and shouts

of welcome. They were more likely to be greeted with hisses and

cat-calls, sticks and stones, stale eggs and decayed cabbages, hoots

and yells of derision, and decorations of tar and feathers.

In some towns of Vermont slanderous reports were made in advance of

their arrival, their characters were assailed, and their aims and

objects misrepresented. In Syracuse, afterward distinguished for its

strong anti-slavery sentiment, the abolitionists were compelled to

hold their meetings in the public park, from inability to procure a

house in which to speak; and only after their convention was well

under way were they offered the shelter of a dilapidated and abandoned

church. In Rochester they met with a more hospitable reception. The

indifference of Buffalo so disgusted Douglass's companions that they

shook the dust of the city from their feet, and left Douglass, who was

accustomed to coldness and therefore undaunted by it, to tread the

wine-press alone. He spoke in an old post-office for nearly a week,

to such good purpose that a church was thrown open to him; and on

a certain Sunday, in the public park, he held and thrilled by his

eloquence an audience of five thousand people.

On leaving Buffalo, Douglass joined the other speakers, and went

with them to Clinton County, Ohio, where, under a large tent, a mass

meeting was held of abolitionists who had come from widely scattered

points. During an excursion made about this time to Pennsylvania to

attend a convention at Norristown, an attempt was made to lynch him at

Manayunk; but his usual good fortune served him, and he lived to be

threatened by higher powers than a pro-slavery mob.

When the party of reformers reached Indiana, where the pro-slavery

spirit was always strong, the State having been settled largely by

Southerners, their campaign of education became a running fight, in

which Douglass, whose dark skin attracted most attention, often got

more than his share. His strength and address brought him safely

out of many an encounter; but in a struggle with a mob at Richmond,

Indiana, he was badly beaten and left unconscious on the ground. A

good Quaker took him home in his wagon, his wife bound up Douglass's

wounds and nursed him tenderly,--the Quakers were ever the consistent

friends of freedom,--but for the lack of proper setting he carried to

the grave a stiff hand as the result of this affray. He had often been

introduced to audiences as "a graduate from slavery with his diploma

written upon his back": from Indiana he received the distinction of a

post-graduate degree.

V.

It can easily be understood that such a man as Douglass, thrown thus

into stimulating daily intercourse with some of the brightest minds

of his generation, all animated by a high and noble enthusiasm for

liberty and humanity,--such men as Garrison and Phillips and Gay

and Monroe and many others,--should have developed with remarkable

rapidity those reserves of character and intellect which slavery had

kept in repression. And yet, while aware of his wonderful talent for

oratory, he never for a moment let this knowledge turn his head or

obscure the consciousness that he had brought with him out of slavery

of some of the disabilities of that status. Naturally, his expanding

intelligence sought a wider range of expression; and his simple

narrative of the wrongs of slavery gave way sometimes to a discussion

of its philosophy. His abolitionist friends would have preferred

him to stick a little more closely to the old line,--to furnish the

experience while they provided the argument. But the strong will that

slavery had not been able to break was not always amenable to politic

suggestion. Douglass's style and vocabulary and logic improved so

rapidly that people began to question his having been a slave.

His appearance, speech, and manner differed so little in material

particulars from those of his excellent exemplars that many people

were sceptical of his antecedents. Douglass had, since his escape from

slavery, carefully kept silent about the place he came from and his

master's name and the manner of his escape, for the very good

reason that their revelation would have informed his master of his

whereabouts and rendered his freedom precarious; for the fugitive

slave law was in force, and only here and there could local public

sentiment have prevented its operation. Confronted with the

probability of losing his usefulness, as the "awful example," Douglass

took the bold step of publishing in the spring of 1845 the narrative

of his experience as a slave, giving names of people and places, and

dates as nearly as he could recall them. His abolitionist friends

doubted the expediency of this step; and Wendell Phillips advised him

to throw the manuscript into the fire, declaring that the government

of Massachusetts had neither the power nor the will to protect him

from the consequences of his daring.

The pamphlet was widely read. It was written in a style of graphic

simplicity, and was such an \_exposé\_ of slavery as exasperated its

jealous supporters and beneficiaries. Douglass soon had excellent

reasons to fear that he would be recaptured by force or guile and

returned to slavery or a worse fate. The prospect was not an alluring

one; and hence, to avoid an involuntary visit to the scenes of his

childhood, he sought liberty beyond the sea, where men of his color

have always enjoyed a larger freedom than in their native land.

In 1845 Douglass set sail for England on board the \_Cambria\_, of the

Cunard Line, accompanied by James N. Buffum, a prominent abolitionist

of Lynn, Massachusetts. On the same steamer were the Hutchinson

family, who lent their sweet songs to the anti-slavery crusade.

Douglass's color rendered him ineligible for cabin passage, and he was

relegated to the steerage. Nevertheless, he became quite the lion of

the vessel, made the steerage fashionable, was given the freedom

of the ship, and invited to lecture on slavery. This he did to the

satisfaction of all the passengers except a few young men from New

Orleans and Georgia, who, true to the instincts of their caste, made

his strictures on the South a personal matter, and threatened to throw

him overboard. Their zeal was diminished by an order of the captain to

put them in irons. They sulked in their cabins, however, and rushed

into print when they reached Liverpool, thus giving Douglass the very

introduction he needed to the British public, which was promptly

informed, by himself and others, of the true facts in regard to the

steamer speech and the speaker.

VI.

The two years Douglass spent in Great Britain upon this visit were

active and fruitful ones, and did much to bring him to that full

measure of development scarcely possible for him in slave-ridden

America. For while the English government had fostered slavery prior

to the Revolution, and had only a few years before Douglass's visit

abolished it in its own colonies, this wretched system had never

fastened its clutches upon the home islands. Slaves had been brought

to England, it is true, and carried away; but, when the right to

remove them was questioned in court, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield,

with an abundance of argument and precedent to support a position

similar to that of Justice Taney in the Dred Scott case, had taken the

contrary view, and declared that the air of England was free, and the

slave who breathed it but once ceased thereby to be a slave. History

and humanity have delivered their verdict on these two decisions, and

time is not likely to disturb it.

A few days after landing at Liverpool, Douglass went to Ireland, where

the agitation for the repeal of the union between Great Britain and

Ireland was in full swing, under the leadership of Daniel O'Connell,

the great Irish orator. O'Connell had denounced slavery in words

of burning eloquence. The Garrisonian abolitionists advocated the

separation of the free and slave States as the only means of securing

some part of the United States to freedom. The American and Irish

disunionists were united by a strong bond of sympathy. Douglass was

soon referred to as "the black O'Connell," and lectured on slavery and

on temperance to large and enthusiastic audiences. He was introduced

to O'Connell, and exchanged compliments with him. A public breakfast

was given him at Cork, and a soiree by Father Matthew, the eminent

leader of the great temperance crusade which at that time shared with

the repeal agitation the public interest of Ireland. A reception to

Douglass and his friend Buffum was held in St. Patricks Temperance

Hall, where they were greeted with a special song of welcome, written

for the occasion. On January 6, 1846, a public breakfast was given

Douglass at Belfast, at which the local branch of the British and

Foreign Anti-slavery Society presented him with a Bible bound in gold.

After four months in Ireland, where he delivered more than fifty

lectures, Douglass and his friend Buffum left Ireland, on January 10,

1846, for Scotland, where another important reform was in progress. It

was an epoch of rebellion against the established order of things.

The spirit of revolt was in the air. The disruption movement in the

Established Church of Scotland, led by the famous Dr. Chalmers, had

culminated in 1843 in the withdrawal of four hundred and seventy

ministers, who gave up the shelter and security of the Establishment

for the principle that a congregation should choose its own pastor,

and organized themselves into the Free Protesting Church, commonly

called the Free Kirk. An appeal had been issued to the Presbyterian

churches of the world for aid to establish a sustentation fund for the

use of the new church. Among the contributions from the United States

was one from a Presbyterian church in Charleston, South Carolina. Just

before this contribution arrived a South Carolina judge had condemned

a Northern man to death for aiding the escape of a female slave. This

incident had aroused horror and indignation throughout Great Britain.

Lord Brougham had commented on it in the House of Lords, and Lord

Chief Justice Denham had characterized it "in the name of all the

judges of England" as a "horrible iniquity." O'Connell had rejected

profferred contributions from the Southern States, and an effort was

made in Scotland to have the South Carolina money sent back. The

attempt failed ultimately; but the agitation on the subject was for a

time very fierce, and gave Douglass and his friends the opportunity to

strike many telling blows at slavery. He had never minced his words in

the United States, and he now handled without gloves the government

whose laws had driven him from its borders.

From Scotland Douglass went to England, where he found still another

great reform movement nearing a triumphant conclusion. The Anti-corn

Law League, after many years of labor, under the leadership of Richard

Cobden and John Bright, for the abolition of the protective tariff on

wheat and other kinds of grain for food, had brought its agitation to

a successful issue; and on June 26, 1846, the Corn Laws were repealed.

The generous enthusiasm for reform of one kind or another that

pervaded the British Islands gave ready sympathy and support to the

abolitionists in their mission. The abolition of slavery in the

colonies had been decreed by Parliament in 1833, but the old leaders

in that reform had not lost their zeal for liberty. George Thompson,

who with Clarkson and Wilberforce had led the British abolitionists,

invited Garrison over to help reorganize the anti-slavery sentiment of

Great Britain against American slavery; and in August, 1846, Garrison

went to England, in that year evidently a paradise of reformers.

During the week beginning May 17, 1846, Douglass addressed

respectively the annual meeting of the British and Foreign

Anti-slavery Society, a peace convention, a suffrage extension

meeting, and a temperance convention, and spoke also at a reception

where efforts were made to induce him to remain in England, and money

subscribed to bring over his family. As will be seen hereafter, he

chose the alternative of returning to the United States.

On August 7, 1846, Douglass addressed the World's Temperance

Convention, held at Covent Garden Theatre, London. There were many

speakers, and the time allotted to each was brief; but Douglass never

lost an opportunity to attack slavery, and he did so on this occasion

over the shoulder of temperance. He stated that he was not a delegate

to the convention, because those whom he might have represented were

placed beyond the pale of American temperance societies either by

slavery or by an inveterate prejudice against their color. He referred

to the mobbing of a procession of colored temperance societies in

Philadelphia several years before, the burning of one of their

churches, and the wrecking of their best temperance hall. These

remarks brought out loud protests and calls for order from the

American delegates present, who manifested the usual American

sensitiveness to criticism, especially on the subject of slavery; but

the house sustained Douglass, and demanded that he go on. Douglass was

denounced for this in a letter to the New York papers by Rev. Dr. Cox,

one of the American delegates.

Douglass's reply to this letter gave him the better of the

controversy. He sometimes expressed the belief, founded on long

experience, that doctors of divinity were, as a rule, among the most

ardent supporters of slavery. Dr. Cox, who seems at least to have met

the description, was also a delegate to the Evangelical Alliance,

which met in London, August 19, 1846, with a membership of one

thousand delegates from fifty different evangelical sects throughout

the world. The question was raised in the convention whether or not

fellowship should be held with slaveholders. Dr. Cox and the other

Americans held that it should, and their views ultimately prevailed.

Douglass made some telling speeches at Anti-slavery League meetings,

in denunciation of the cowardice of the Alliance, and won a wide

popularity.

Douglass remained in England two years. Not only did this visit give

him a great opportunity to influence British public opinion against

slavery, but the material benefits to himself were inestimable. He

had left the United States a slave before the law, denied every civil

right and every social privilege, literally a man without a country,

and forced to cross the Atlantic among the cattle in the steerage of

the steamboat. During his sojourn in Great Britain an English lady,

Mrs. Ellen Richardson, of Newcastle, had raised seven hundred and

fifty dollars, which was paid over to Hugh Auld, of Maryland, to secure

Douglass's legal manumission; and, not content with this generous

work, the same large-hearted lady had raised by subscription about

two thousand five hundred dollars, which Douglass carried back to the

United States as a free gift, and used to start his newspaper. He had

met in Europe, as he said in a farewell speech, men quite as white as

he had ever seen in the United States and of quite as noble exterior,

and had seen in their faces no scorn of his complexion. He had

travelled over the four kingdoms, and had encountered no sign of

disrespect. He had been lionized in London, had spoken every night of

his last month there, and had declined as many more invitations. He had

shaken hands with the venerable Clarkson, and had breakfasted with the

philosopher Combe, the author of \_The Constitution of Man\_. He had won

the friendship of John Bright, had broken bread with Sir John Bowring,

had been introduced to Lord Brougham, the brilliant leader of the

Liberal party, and had listened to his wonderful eloquence. He had met

Douglas Jerrold, the famous wit, and had been entertained by the poet

William Howitt, who made a farewell speech in his honor. Everywhere he

had denounced slavery, everywhere hospitable doors had opened wide to

receive him, everywhere he had made friends for himself and his cause.

A slave and an outcast at home, he had been made to feel himself a

gentleman, had been the companion of great men and good women. Urged

to remain in this land of freedom, and offered aid to establish

himself in life there, his heart bled for his less fortunate brethren

in captivity; and, with the God-speed of his English friends ringing

in his ears, he went back to America,--to scorn, to obloquy, to

ostracism, but after all to the work to which he had been ordained,

and which he was so well qualified to perform.

VII.

Douglass landed April 20, 1847. He returned to the United States

with the intention of publishing the newspaper for which his English

friends had so kindly furnished the means; but his plan meeting with

opposition from his abolitionist friends, who thought the platform

offered him a better field for usefulness, he deferred the enterprise

until near the end of the year. In the mean time he plunged again into

the thick of the anti-slavery agitation. We find him lecturing in

May in the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, and writing letters to the

anti-slavery papers. In June he was elected president of the New

England Anti-slavery Convention. In August and September he went on a

lecturing tour with Garrison and others through Pennsylvania and Ohio.

On this tour the party attended the commencement exercises of Oberlin

College, famous for its anti-slavery principles and practice, and

spoke to immense meetings at various places in Ohio and New York.

Their cause was growing in popular favor; and, in places where

formerly they had spoken out of doors because of the difficulty of

securing a place of meeting, they were now compelled to speak in the

open air, because the churches and halls would not contain their

audiences.

On December 3, 1847, the first number of the \_North Star\_ appeared.

Douglass's abolitionist friends had not yet become reconciled to this

project, and his persistence in it resulted in a temporary coldness

between them. They very naturally expected him to be guided by their

advice. They had found him on the wharf at New Bedford, and given him

his chance in life; and they may easily be pardoned for finding it

presumptuous in him to disregard their advice and adopt a new line of

conduct without consulting them. Mr. Garrison wrote in a letter to his

wife from Cleveland, "It will also greatly surprise our friends in

Boston to hear that in regard to his prospect of establishing a paper

here, to be called the North Star, he never opened his lips to me

on the subject nor asked my advice in any particular whatever." But

Samuel May Jr., in a letter written to one of Douglass's English

friends, in which he mentions this charge of Garrison, adds, "It is

only common justice to Frederick Douglass to inform you that this is a

mistake; that, on the contrary, he did speak to Mr. Garrison about it,

just before he was taken ill at Cleveland." The probability is that

Douglass had his mind made up, and did not seek advice, and that Mr.

Garrison did not attach much importance to any casual remark Douglass

may have made upon the subject. In a foot-note to the \_Life and Times

of Garrison\_ it is stated:--

"This enterprise was not regarded with favor by the leading

abolitionists, who knew only too well the precarious support which a

fifth anti-slavery paper, edited by a colored man, must have, and who

appreciated to the full Douglass's unrivalled powers as a lecturer

in the field ... As anticipated, it nearly proved the ruin of its

projector; but by extraordinary exertions it was kept alive, not,

however, on the platform of Garrisonian abolitionism. The necessary

support could only be secured by a change of principles in accordance

with Mr. Douglass's immediate (political abolition) environment."

Douglass's own statement does not differ very widely from this,

except that he does not admit the mercenary motive for his change

of principles. It was in deference, however, to the feelings of his

former associates that the \_North Star\_ was established at Rochester

instead of in the East, where the field for anti-slavery papers was

already fully occupied. In Rochester, then as now the centre of a

thrifty, liberal, and progressive population, Douglass gradually won

the sympathy and support which such an enterprise demanded.

The \_North Star\_, in size, typography, and interest, compared

favorably with the other weeklies of the day, and lived for seventeen

years. It had, however, its "ups and downs." At one time the editor

had mortgaged his house to pay the running expenses; but friends came

to his aid, his debts were paid, and the circulation of the paper

doubled. In \_My Bondage and My Freedom\_ Douglass gives the names of

numerous persons who helped him in these earlier years of editorial

effort, among whom were a dozen of the most distinguished public men

of his day. After the \_North Star\_ had been in existence several

years, its name was changed to \_Frederick Douglass's Paper\_, to give

it a more distinctive designation, the newspaper firmament already

scintillating with many other "Stars."

In later years Douglass speaks of this newspaper enterprise as one of

the wisest things he ever undertook. To paraphrase Lord Bacon's famous

maxim, much reading of life and of books had made him a full man, and

much speaking had made him a ready man. The attempt to put facts

and arguments into literary form tended to make him more logical

in reasoning and more exact in statement. One of the effects of

Douglass's editorial responsibility and the influences brought to bear

upon him by reason of it, was a change in his political views. Until

he began the publication of the \_North Star\_ and for several years

thereafter, he was, with the rest of the Garrisonians, a pronounced

disunionist. He held to the Garrisonian doctrine that the pro-slavery

Constitution of the United States was a "league with death and a

covenant with hell," maintained that anti-slavery men should not vote

under it, and advocated the separation of the free States as the

only means of preventing the utter extinction of freedom by the

ever-advancing encroachments of the slave power. In Rochester he found

himself in the region where the Liberty party, under the leadership of

James G. Birney, Salmon P. Chase, Gerrit Smith, and others, had its

largest support. The Liberty party maintained that slavery could be

fought best with political weapons, that by the power of the ballot

slavery could be confined strictly within its constitutional limits

and prevented from invading new territory, and that it could be

extinguished by the respective States whenever the growth of public

opinion demanded it. One wing of the party took the more extreme

ground that slavery was contrary to the true intent and meaning of

the Constitution, and demanded that the country should return to the

principles of liberty upon which it was founded. Though the more

radical abolitionists were for a time bitterly opposed to these views,

yet the Liberty party was the natural outgrowth of the abolition

agitation. Garrison and Phillips and Douglass and the rest had

planted, Birney and Gerrit Smith and Chase and the rest watered, and

the Union party, led by the great emancipator, garnered the grain

after a bloody harvest.

Several influences must have co-operated to modify Douglass's

political views. The moral support and occasional financial aid given

his paper by members of the Liberty party undoubtedly predisposed

him favorably to their opinions. His retirement as agent of the

Anti-slavery Society and the coolness resulting therefrom had taken

him out of the close personal contact with those fervent spirits who

had led the van in the struggle for liberty. Their zeal had been more

disinterested, perhaps, than Douglass's own; for, after all, they had

no personal stake in the outcome, while to Douglass and his people the

abolition of slavery was a matter of life and death. Serene in the

high altitude of their convictions, the Garrisonians would accept no

halfway measures, would compromise no principles, and, if their right

arm offended them, would cut it off with sublime fortitude and cast it

into the fire. They wanted a free country, where the fleeing victim of

slavery could find a refuge. Douglass perceived the immense advantage

these swarming millions would gain through being free in the States

where they already were. He had always been minded to do the best

thing possible. When a slave, he had postponed his escape until it

seemed entirely feasible. When denied cabin passage on steamboats,

he had gone in the steerage or on deck. When he had been refused

accommodation in a hotel, he had sought it under any humble roof that

offered. It would have been a fine thing in the abstract to refuse the

half-loaf, but in that event we should have had no Frederick Douglass.

It was this very vein of prudence, keeping always in view the object

to be attained, and in a broad, non-Jesuitical sense subordinating the

means to the end, that enabled Douglass to prolong his usefulness a

generation after the abolition of slavery. Douglass in his \_Life and

Times\_ states his own case as follows:

"After a time, a careful reconsideration of the subject convinced

me that there was no necessity for dissolving the union between the

Northern and Southern States; that to seek this dissolution was no

part of my duty as an abolitionist; that to abstain from voting was

to refuse to exercise a legitimate and powerful means for abolishing

slavery; and that the Constitution of the United States not only

contained no guarantees in favor of slavery, but, on the contrary, was

in its letter and spirit an anti-slavery instrument, demanding the

abolition of slavery as a condition of its own existence, as the

supreme law of the land."

This opinion was not exactly the opinion of the majority of the

Liberty party, which did not question the constitutionality of slavery

in the slave States. Neither was it the opinion of the Supreme Court,

which in the Dred Scott case held that the Constitution guaranteed

not only the right to hold slaves, but to hold them in free States.

Nevertheless, entertaining the views he did, Douglass was able to

support the measures which sought to oppose slavery through political

action. In August, 1848, while his Garrisonian views were as yet

unchanged, he had been present as a spectator at the Free Soil

Convention at Buffalo. In his Life and Times he says of this

gathering: "This Buffalo Convention of Free Soilers, however low their

standard, did lay the foundation of a grand superstructure. It was a

powerful link in the chain of events by which the slave system has

been abolished, the slave emancipated, and the country saved from

dismemberment." In 1851 Douglass announced that his sympathies were

with the voting abolitionists, and thenceforth he supported by voice

and pen Hale, Fremont, and Lincoln, the successive candidates of the

new party.

Douglass's political defection very much intensified the feeling

against him among his former coadjutors. The Garrisonians, with their

usual plain speaking, did not hesitate to say what they thought of

Douglass. Their three papers, the \_Liberator\_, the \_Standard\_, and the

\_Freeman\_, assailed Douglass fiercely, and charged him with treachery,

inconsistency, ingratitude, and all the other crimes so easily imputed

to one who changes his opinions. Garrison and Phillips and others of

his former associates denounced him as a deserter, and attributed his

change of heart to mercenary motives. Douglass seems to have borne

himself with rare dignity and moderation in this trying period. He

realized perfectly well that he was on the defensive, and that the

burden devolved upon him to justify his change of front. This he seems

to have attempted vigorously, but by argument rather than invective.

Even during the height of the indignation against him Douglass

disclaimed any desire to antagonize his former associates. He simply

realized that there was more than one way to fight slavery,--which

knew a dozen ways to maintain itself,--and had concluded to select the

one that seemed most practical. He was quite willing that his former

friends should go their own way. "No personal assaults," he wrote to

George Thompson, the English abolitionist, who wrote to him for an

explanation of the charges made against him, "shall ever lead me to

forget that some, who in America have often made me the subject

of personal abuse, are in their own way earnestly working for the

abolition of slavery."

In later years, when political action had resulted in abolition, some

of these harsh judgments were modified, and Douglass and his earlier

friends met in peace and harmony. The debt he owed to William Lloyd

Garrison he ever delighted to acknowledge. His speech on the death of

Garrison breathes in every word the love and honor in which he held

him. In one of the last chapters of his \_Life and Times\_ he makes a

sweeping acknowledgment of his obligations to the men and women who

rendered his career possible.

"It was my good fortune," he writes, "to get out of slavery at the

right time, to be speedily brought in contact with that circle of

highly cultivated men and women, banded together for the overthrow of

slavery, of which William Lloyd Garrison was the acknowledged leader.

To these friends, earnest, courageous, inflexible, ready to own me as

a man and a brother, against all the scorn, contempt, and derision of

a slavery-polluted atmosphere, I owe my success in life."

VIII.

Events moved rapidly in the decade preceding the war. In 1850 the new

Fugitive Slave Law brought discouragement to the hearts of the friends

of liberty. Douglass's utterances during this period breathed the

fiery indignation which he felt when the slave-driver's whip was heard

cracking over the free States, and all citizens were ordered to aid

in the enforcement of this inhuman statute when called upon. This law

really defeated its own purpose. There were thousands of conservative

Northern men, who, recognizing the constitutional guarantees of

slavery and the difficulty of abolishing it unless the South should

take the initiative, were content that it should be preserved intact

so long as it remained a local institution. But when the attempt was

made to make the North wash the South's dirty linen, and transform

every man in the Northern States into a slave-catcher, it wrought a

revulsion of feeling that aroused widespread sympathy for the slave

and strengthened the cause of freedom amazingly. Thousands of escaped

slaves were living in Northern communities. Some of them had acquired

homes, had educated their children, and in some States had become

citizens and voters. Already social pariahs, restricted generally to

menial labor, bearing the burdens of poverty and prejudice, they now

had thrust before them the spectre of the kidnapper, the slave-catcher

with his affidavit, and the United States [Supreme] Court, which

was made by this law the subservient tool of tyranny. This law gave

Douglass and the other abolitionists a new text. It was a set-back to

their cause; but they were not entirely disheartened, for they saw in

it the desperate expedients by which it was sought to bolster up an

institution already doomed by the advancing tide of civilization.

The loss of slaves had become a serious drain upon the border States.

The number of refugees settled in the North was, of course, largely

a matter of estimate. Runaway slaves were not apt to advertise their

status, but rather to conceal it, so that most estimates were more

likely to be under than over the truth. Henry Wilson places the number

in the free States at twenty thousand. There were in Boston in 1850,

according to a public statement of Theodore Parker, from four to six

hundred; and in other New England towns, notably New Bedford, the

number was large. Other estimates place the figures much higher. Mr.

Siebert, in his \_Underground Railroad\_, after a careful calculation

from the best obtainable data, puts the number of fugitives aided in

Ohio alone at forty thousand in the thirty years preceding 1860, and

in the same period nine thousand in the city of Philadelphia alone,

which was one of the principal stations of the underground railroad

and the home of William Still, whose elaborate work on the

\_Underground Railroad\_ gives the details of many thrilling escapes.

In the work of assisting runaway slaves Douglass found congenial

employment. It was exciting and dangerous, but inspiring and

soul-satisfying. He kept a room in his house always ready for

fugitives, having with him as many as eleven at a time. He would keep

them over night, pay their fare on the train for Canada, and give them

half a dollar extra. And Canada, to her eternal honor be it said,

received these assisted emigrants, with their fifty cents apiece, of

alien race, debauched by slavery, gave them welcome and protection,

refused to enter into diplomatic relations for their rendition to

bondage, and spoke well of them as men and citizens when Henry Clay

and the other slave [pro-slavery] leaders denounced them as the most

worthless of their class. The example of Canada may be commended to

those persons in the United States, of little faith, who, because in

thirty years the emancipated race have not equalled the white man in

achievement, are fearful lest nothing good can be expected of them.

In the stirring years of the early fifties Douglass led a busy life.

He had each week to fill the columns of his paper and raise the money

to pay its expenses. Add to this his platform work and the underground

railroad work, which consisted not only in personal aid to the

fugitives, but in raising money to pay their expenses, and his time

was very adequately employed. In every anti-slavery meeting his face

was welcome, and his position as a representative of his own peculiar

people was daily strengthened.

When Uncle Tom's Cabin, in 1852, set the world on fire over the wrongs

of the slave,--or rather the wrongs of slavery, for that wonderful

book did not portray the negro as the only sufferer from this hoary

iniquity,--Mrs. Stowe, in her new capacity as a champion of liberty,

conceived the plan of raising a fund for the benefit of the colored

race, and in 1853 invited Douglass to visit her at Andover,

Massachusetts, where she consulted with him in reference to the

establishment of an industrial institute or trades school for colored

youth, with a view to improving their condition in the free States.

Douglass approved heartily of this plan, and through his paper made

himself its sponsor. When, later on, Mrs. Stowe abandoned the project,

Douglass was made the subject of some criticism, though he was not at

all to blame for Mrs. Stowes altered plans. In our own time the value

of such institutions has been widely recognized, and the success of

those at Hampton and Tuskegee has stimulated anew the interest in

industrial education as one important factor in the elevation of the

colored race.

In the years from 1853 to 1860 the slave power, inspired with divine

madness, rushed headlong toward its doom. The arbitrary enforcement of

the Fugitive Slave Act; the struggle between freedom and slavery in

Kansas; the Dred Scott decision, by which a learned and subtle judge,

who had it within his power to enlarge the boundaries of human liberty

and cover his own name with glory, deliberately and laboriously

summarized and dignified with the sanction of a court of last resort

all the most odious prejudices that had restricted the opportunities

of the colored people; the repeal of the Missouri Compromise; the John

Brown raid; the [1855] assault on [Massachusetts antislavery U.S.

Senator] Charles Sumner,--each of these incidents has been, in itself,

the subject of more than one volume. Of these events the Dred Scott

decision was the most disheartening. Douglass was not proof against

the universal gloom, and began to feel that there was little hope of

the peaceful solution of the question of slavery. It was in one of his

darker moments that old Sojourner Truth, whose face appeared in so

many anti-slavery gatherings, put her famous question, which breathed

a sublime and childlike faith in God, even when his hand seemed

heaviest on her people: "Frederick," she asked, "is God dead?" The

orator paused impressively, and then thundered in a voice that

thrilled his audience with prophetic intimations, "No, God is not

dead; and therefore it is that slavery must end in blood!"

During this period John Brown stamped his name indelibly upon American

history. It was almost inevitable that a man of the views, activities,

and prominence of Douglass should become acquainted with John Brown.

Their first meeting, however, was in 1847, more than ten years before

the tragic episode at Harpers Ferry. At that time Brown was a merchant

at Springfield, Massachusetts, whither Douglass was invited to visit

him. In his \_Life and Times\_ he describes Brown as a prosperous

merchant, who in his home lived with the utmost abstemiousness, in

order that he might save money for the great scheme he was already

revolving. "His wife believed in him, and his children observed him

with reverence. His arguments seemed to convince all, his appeals

touched all, and his will impressed all. Certainly, I never felt

myself in the presence of stronger religious influence than while in

this man's house." There in his own home, where Douglass stayed as his

guest, Brown outlined a plan which in substantially the same form he

held dear to his heart for a decade longer. This plan, briefly stated,

was to establish camps at certain easily defended points in the

Allegheny Mountains; to send emissaries down to the plantations in

the lowlands, starting in Virginia, and draw off the slaves to these

mountain fastnesses; to maintain bands of them there, if possible, as

a constant menace to slavery and an example of freedom; or, if that

were impracticable, to lead them to Canada from time to time by the

most available routes. Wild as this plan may seem in the light of the

desperate game subsequently played by slavery, it did not at the time

seem impracticable to such level-headed men as Theodore Parker and

Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

Douglass's views were very much colored by his association with

Brown; but, with his usual prudence and foresight, he pointed out the

difficulties of this plan. From the time of their first meeting the

relations of the two men were friendly and confidential. Captain Brown

had his scheme ever in mind, and succeeded in convincing Douglass and

others that it would subserve a useful purpose,--that, even if it

resulted in failure, it would stir the conscience of the nation to a

juster appreciation of the iniquity of slavery.

The Kansas troubles, however, turned Brown's energies for a time into

a different channel. After Kansas had been secured to freedom, he

returned with renewed ardor to his old project. He stayed for three

weeks at Douglass's house at Rochester, and while there carried on

an extensive correspondence with sympathizers and supporters, and

thoroughly demonstrated to all with whom he conversed that he was a

man of one all-absorbing idea.

In 1859, very shortly before the raid at Harpers Ferry, Douglass met

Brown by appointment, in an abandoned stone quarry near Chambersburg,

Pennsylvania. John Brown was already an outlaw, with a price upon his

head; for a traitor had betrayed his plan the year before, and he had

for this reason deferred its execution for a year. The meeting was

surrounded by all the mystery and conducted with all the precautions

befitting a meeting of conspirators. Brown had changed the details

of his former plan, and told Douglass of his determination to take

Harpers Ferry. Douglass opposed the measure vehemently, pointing out

its certain and disastrous failure. Brown met each argument with

another, and was not to be swayed from his purpose. They spent more

than a day together discussing the details of the movement. When the

more practical Douglass declined to take part in Brown's attempt, the

old man threw his arms around his swarthy friend, in a manner typical

of his friendship for the dark race, and said: "Come with me,

Douglass, I will defend you with my life. I want you for a special

purpose. When I strike, the bees will begin to swarm, and I shall

want you to help hive them." But Douglass would not be persuaded. His

abandonment of his old friend on the eve of a desperate enterprise was

criticised by some, who, as Douglass says, "kept even farther from

this brave and heroic man than I did." John Brown went forth to meet

a felon's fate and wear a martyr's crown: Douglass lived to fight the

battles of his race for years to come. There was room for both, and

each played the part for which he was best adapted. It would have

strengthened the cause of liberty very little for Douglass to die with

Brown.

It is quite likely, however, that he narrowly escaped Brown's fate.

When the raid at Harpers Ferry had roused the country, Douglass, with

other leading Northern men, was indicted in Virginia for complicity in

the affair. Brown's correspondence had fallen into the hands of

the Virginia authorities, and certain letters seemed to implicate

Douglass. A trial in Virginia meant almost certain death. Governor

Wise, of Virginia, would have hung him with cheerful alacrity, and

publicly expressed his desire to do so. Douglass, with timely warning

that extradition papers had been issued for his arrest, escaped to

Canada. He had previously planned a second visit to England, and the

John Brown affair had delayed his departure by some days. He sailed

from Quebec, November 12, 1859.

After a most uncomfortable winter voyage of fourteen days Douglass

found himself again in England, an object of marked interest and in

very great demand as a speaker. Six months he spent on the hospitable

shores of Great Britain, lecturing on John Brown, on slavery and other

subjects, and renewing the friendships of former years. Being informed

of the death of his youngest daughter, he cut short his visit, which

he had meant to extend to France, and returned to the United States.

So rapid had been the course of events since his departure that the

excitement over the John Brown raid had subsided. The first Lincoln

campaign was in active progress; and the whole country quivered with

vague anticipation of the impending crisis which was to end the

conflict of irreconcilable principles, and sweep slavery out of the

path of civilization and progress. Douglass plunged into the campaign

with his accustomed zeal, and did what he could to promote the triumph

of the Republican party. Lincoln was elected, and in a few short

months the country found itself in the midst of war. God was not dead,

and slavery was to end in blood.

IX.

Ever mindful of his people and seeking always to promote their

welfare, Douglass was one of those who urged, in all his addresses at

this period, the abolition of slavery and the arming of the negroes

as the most effective means of crushing the rebellion. In 1862 he

delivered a series of lectures in New England under the auspices of

the recently formed Emancipation League, which contended for abolition

as a military necessity.

The first or conditional emancipation proclamation was issued in

September, 1862; and shortly afterward Douglass published a pamphlet

for circulation in Great Britain, entitled \_The Slave's Appeal to

Great Britain\_, in which he urged the English people to refuse

recognition of the independence of the Confederate States. He always

endeavored in his public utterances to remove the doubts and fears of

those who were tempted to leave the negroes in slavery because of the

difficulty of disposing of them after they became free. Douglass, with

the simple, direct, primitive sense of justice that had always marked

his mind, took the only true ground for the solution of the race

problems of that or any other epoch,-that the situation should be met

with equal and exact justice, and that his people should be allowed to

do as they pleased with themselves, "subject only to the same great

laws which apply to other men." He was a conspicuous figure at the

meeting in Tremont Temple, Boston, on January 1, 1863, when the

Emancipation Proclamation, hourly expected by an anxious gathering,

finally flashed over the wires. Douglass was among the first to

suggest the employment of colored troops in the Union army. In spite

of all assertions to the contrary, he foresaw in the war the end of

slavery. He perceived that by the enlistment of colored men not only

would the Northern arms be strengthened, but his people would win an

opportunity to exercise one of the highest rights of freemen, and by

valor on the field of battle to remove some of the stigma that slavery

had placed upon them. He strove through every channel at his command

to impress his views upon the country; and his efforts helped to

swell the current of opinion which found expression, after several

intermediate steps, in the enlistment of two colored regiments by

Governor Andrew, the famous war governor of Massachusetts, a State

foremost in all good works. When Mr. Lincoln had granted permission

for the recruiting of these regiments, Douglass issued through his

paper a stirring appeal, which was copied in the principal journals of

the Union States, exhorting his people to rally to this call, to seize

this opportunity to strike a blow at slavery and win the gratitude

of the country and the blessings of liberty for themselves and their

posterity.

Douglass exerted himself personally in procuring enlistments, his two

sons [his youngest and his oldest], Charles and Lewis, being [among]

the first in New York to enlist; for the two Massachusetts regiments

were recruited all over the North. Lewis H. Douglass, sergeant-major

in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts, was among the foremost on the

ramparts at Fort Wagner. Both these sons of Douglass survived the war,

and are now well known and respected citizens of Washington, D.C. The

Fifty-fourth Massachusetts, under the gallant but ill-fated Colonel

Shaw, won undying glory in the conflict; and the heroic deeds of the

officers and men of this regiment are fittingly commemorated in the

noble monument by St. Gaudens, recently erected on Boston Common, to

stand as an inspiration of freedom and patriotism for the future and

as testimony that a race which for generations had been deprived of

arms and liberty could worthily bear the one and defend the other.

Douglass was instrumental in persuading the government to put colored

soldiers on an equal footing with white soldiers, both as to pay and

protection. In the course of these efforts he was invited to visit

President Lincoln. He describes this memorable interview in detail in

his \_Life and Times\_. The President welcomed him with outstretched

hands, put him at once at his ease, and listened patiently and

attentively to all that he had to say. Douglass maintained that

colored soldiers should receive the same pay as white soldiers, should

be protected and exchanged as prisoners, and should be rewarded, by

promotion, for deeds of valor. The President suggested some of the

difficulties to be overcome; but both he and Secretary of War Stanton,

whom Douglass also visited, assured him that in the end his race

should be justly treated. Stanton, before the close of the interview

with him, promised Douglass a commission as assistant adjutant

to General Lorenzo Thomas, then recruiting colored troops in the

Mississippi Valley. But Stanton evidently changed his mind, since the

commission, somewhat to Douglass's chagrin, never came to hand.

When McClellan had been relieved by Grant, and the new leader of the

Union forces was fighting the stubbornly contested campaign of the

Wilderness, President Lincoln again sent for Douglass, to confer with

him with reference to bringing slaves in the rebel States within the

Union lines, so that in the event of premature peace as many slaves

as possible might be free. Douglass undertook, at the President's

suggestion, to organize a band of colored scouts to go among the

negroes and induce them to enter the Union lines. The plan was never

carried out, owing to the rapid success of the Union arms; but the

interview greatly impressed Douglass with the sincerity of the

President's conviction against slavery and his desire to see the war

result in its overthrow. What the colored race may have owed to the

services, in such a quarter, of such an advocate as Douglass, brave,

eloquent, high-principled, and an example to Lincoln of what the

enslaved race was capable of, can only be imagined. That Lincoln was

deeply impressed by these interviews is a matter of history.

Douglass supported vigorously the nomination of Lincoln for a second

term, and was present at his [March 4] inauguration. And a few days

later, while the inspired words of the inaugural address, long

bracketed with the noblest of human utterances, were still ringing in

his ears, he spoke at the meeting held in Rochester to mourn the death

of the martyred President, and made one of his most eloquent and

moving addresses. It was a time that wrung men's hearts, and none more

than the strong-hearted man's whose race had found its liberty through

him who lay dead at Washington, slain by the hand of an assassin whom

slavery had spawned.

X.

With the fall of slavery and the emancipation of the colored race the

heroic epoch of Douglass's career may be said to have closed. The text

upon which he so long had preached had been expunged from the national

bible; and he had been a one-text preacher, a one-theme orator. He

felt the natural reaction which comes with relief from high mental or

physical tension, and wondered, somewhat sadly, what he should do with

himself, and how he should earn a living. The same considerations,

in varying measure, applied to others of the anti-slavery reformers.

Some, unable to escape the reforming habit, turned their attention

to different social evils, real or imaginary. Others, sufficiently

supplied with this worlds goods for their moderate wants, withdrew

from public life. Douglass was thinking of buying a farm and retiring

to rural solitudes, when a new career opened up for him in the lyceum

lecture field. The North was favorably disposed toward colored men.

They had acquitted themselves well during the war, and had

shown becoming gratitude to their deliverers. The once despised

abolitionists were now popular heroes. Douglass's checkered past

seemed all the more romantic in the light of the brighter present,

like a novel with a pleasant ending; and those who had hung

thrillingly upon his words when he denounced slavery now listened with

interest to what he had to say upon other topics. He spoke sometimes

on Woman Suffrage, of which he was always a consistent advocate.

His most popular lecture was one on "Self-made Men." Another on

"Ethnology," in which he sought a scientific basis for his claim for

the negro's equality with the white man, was not so popular--with

white people. The wave of enthusiasm which had swept the enfranchised

slaves into what seemed at that time the safe harbor of constitutional

right was not, after all, based on abstract doctrines of equality of

intellect, but on an inspiring sense of justice (long dormant under

the influence of slavery, but thoroughly awakened under the moral

stress of the war), which conceded to every man the right of a voice

in his own government and the right to an equal opportunity in life

to develop such powers as he possessed, however great or small these

might be.

But Douglass's work in direct behalf of his race was not yet entirely

done. In fact, he realized very distinctly the vast amount of work

that would be necessary to lift his people up to the level of their

enlarged opportunities; and, as may be gathered from some of his

published utterances, he foresaw that the process would be a long one,

and that their friends might weary sometimes of waiting, and that

there would be reactions toward slavery which would rob emancipation

of much of its value. It was the very imminence of such backward

steps, in the shape of various restrictive and oppressive laws

promptly enacted by the old slave States under President Johnson's

administration, that led Douglass to urge the enfranchisement of the

freedmen. He maintained that in a free country there could be no safe

or logical middle ground between the status of freeman and that of

serf. There has been much criticism because the negro, it is said,

acquired the ballot prematurely. There seemed imperative reasons,

besides that of political expediency, for putting the ballot in his

hands. Recent events have demonstrated that this necessity is as great

now as then. The assumption that negroes--under which generalization

are included all men of color, regardless of that sympathy to which

kinship at least should entitle many of them--are unfit to have a

voice in government is met by the words of Lincoln, which have all the

weight of a political axiom: "No man can be safely trusted to govern

other men without their consent." The contention that a class

who constitute half the population of a State shall be entirely

unrepresented in its councils, because, forsooth, their will there

expressed may affect the government of another class of the same

general population, is as repugnant to justice and human rights as was

the institution of slavery itself. Such a condition of affairs has not

the melodramatic and soul-stirring incidents of chattel slavery, but

its effects can be as far-reaching and as debasing. There has been

some manifestation of its possible consequences in the recent

outbreaks of lynching and other race oppression in the South. The

practical disfranchisement of the colored people in several States,

and the apparent acquiescence by the Supreme Court in the attempted

annulment, by restrictive and oppressive laws, of the war amendments

to the Constitution, have brought a foretaste of what might be

expected should the spirit of the Dred Scott decision become again the

paramount law of the land.

On February 7, 1866, Douglass acted as chief spokesman of a committee

of leading colored men of the country, who called upon President

Johnson to urge the importance of enfranchisement. Mr. Johnson, true

to his Southern instincts, was coldly hostile to the proposition,

recounted all the arguments against it, and refused the committee

an opportunity to reply. The matter was not left with Mr. Johnson,

however; and the committee turned its attention to the leading

Republican statesmen, in whom they found more impressionable material.

Under the leadership of Senators Sumner, Wilson, Wade, and others, the

matter was fully argued in Congress, the Democratic party being in

opposition, as always in national politics, to any measure enlarging

the rights or liberties of the colored race.

In September, 1866, Douglass was elected a delegate from Rochester to

the National Loyalists' Convention at Philadelphia, called to consider

the momentous questions of government growing out of the war. While he

had often attended anti-slavery conventions as the representative of a

small class of abolitionists, his election to represent a large city

in a national convention was so novel a departure from established

usage as to provoke surprise and comment all over the country. On

the way to Philadelphia he was waited upon by a committee of other

delegates, who came to his seat on the train and urged upon him the

impropriety of his taking a seat as a delegate. Douglass listened

patiently, but declined to be moved by their arguments. He replied

that he had been duly elected a delegate from Rochester, and he would

represent that city in the convention. A procession of the members

and friends of the convention was to take place on its opening day.

Douglass was solemnly warned that, if he walked in the procession, he

would probably be mobbed. But he had been mobbed before, more than

once, and had lived through it; and he promptly presented himself at

the place of assembly. His reception by his fellow-delegates was not

cordial, and he seemed condemned to march alone in the procession,

when Theodore Tilton, at that time editor of the \_Independent\_, paired

off with him, and marched by his side through the streets of the

Quaker City. The result was gratifying alike to Douglass and the

friends of liberty and progress. He was cheered enthusiastically all

along the line of march, and became as popular in the convention as he

had hitherto been neglected.

A romantic incident of this march was a pleasant meeting, on the

street, with a daughter of Mrs. Lucretia Auld, the mistress who had

treated him kindly during his childhood on the Lloyd plantation. The

Aulds had always taken an interest in Douglass's career,--he had,

indeed, given the family a wide though not altogether enviable

reputation in his books and lectures,--and this good lady had followed

the procession for miles, that she might have the opportunity to speak

to her grandfather's former slave and see him walk in the procession.

In the convention "the ever-ready and imperial Douglass," as Colonel

Higginson describes him, spoke in behalf of his race. The convention,

however, divided upon the question of negro suffrage, and adjourned

without decisive action. But under President Grant's administration

the Fourteenth Amendment was passed, and by the solemn sanction of the

Constitution the ballot was conferred upon the black men upon the same

terms as those upon which it was enjoyed by the whites.

XI.

It is perhaps fitting, before we take leave of Douglass, to give some

estimate of the remarkable oratory which gave him his hold upon

the past generation. For, while his labors as editor and in other

directions were of great value to the cause of freedom, it is upon his

genius as an orator that his fame must ultimately rest.

While Douglass's color put him in a class by himself among great

orators, and although his slave past threw around him an element of

romance that added charm to his eloquence, these were mere incidental

elements of distinction. The North was full of fugitive slaves, and

more than one had passionately proclaimed his wrongs. There were

several colored orators who stood high in the councils of the

abolitionists and did good service for the cause of humanity.

Douglass possessed, in large measure, the physical equipment most

impressive in an orator. He was a man of magnificent figure, tall,

strong, his head crowned with a mass of hair which made a striking

element of his appearance. He had deep-set and flashing eyes, a firm,

well-moulded chin, a countenance somewhat severe in repose, but

capable of a wide range of expression. His voice was rich and

melodious, and of great carrying power. One writer, who knew him in

the early days of his connection with the abolitionists, says of him,

in Johnson's \_Sketches of Lynn\_:

"He was not then the polished orator he has since become, but even at

that early date he gave promise of the grand part he was to play in

the conflict which was to end in the destruction of the system that

had so long cursed his race.... He was more than six feet in height;

and his majestic form, as he rose to speak, straight as an arrow,

muscular yet lithe and graceful, his flashing eye, and more than all

his voice, that rivalled Webster's in its richness and in the depth

and sonorousness of its cadences, made up such an ideal of an orator

as the listeners never forgot. And they never forgot his burning

words, his pathos, nor the rich play of his humor."

The poet William Howitt said of him on his departure from England in

1847, "He has appeared in this country before the most accomplished

audiences, who were surprised, not only at his talent, but at his

extraordinary information."

In Ireland he was introduced as "the black O'Connell,"--a high

compliment; for O'Connell was at that time the idol of the Irish

people. In Scotland they called him the "black Douglass [Douglas],"

after his prototype in \_The Lady of the Lake\_, because of his fìre

and vigor. In Rochester he was called the "swarthy Ajax," from his

indignant denunciation and defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law of

1850, which came like a flash of lightning to blast the hopes of the

anti-slavery people.

Douglass possessed in unusual degree the faculty of swaying his

audience, sometimes against their maturer judgment. There is something

in the argument from first principles which, if presented with force

and eloquence, never fails to appeal to those who are not blinded by

self-interest or deep-seated prejudice. Douglass's argument was that

of the Declaration of Independence,--"that \_all\_ men are created

equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable

rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of

happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted

among men, deriving their just powers from the \_consent of the

governed\_." The writer may be pardoned for this quotation; for there

are times when we seem to forget that now and here, no less than in

ancient Rome, "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Douglass

brushed aside all sophistries about Constitutional guarantees, and

vested rights, and inferior races, and, having postulated the right of

men to be free, maintained that negroes were men, and offered himself

as a proof of his assertion,--an argument that few had the temerity

to deny. If it were answered that he was only half a negro, he would

reply that slavery made no such distinction, and as a still more

irrefutable argument would point to his friend, Samuel R. Ward, who

often accompanied him on the platform,--an eloquent and effective

orator, of whom Wendell Phillips said that "he was so black that, if

he would shut his eyes, one could not see him." It was difficult for

an auditor to avoid assent to such arguments, presented with all the

force and fire of genius, relieved by a ready wit, a contagious humor,

and a tear-compelling power rarely excelled.

"As a speaker," says one of his contemporaries, "he has few equals. It

is not declamation, but oratory, power of description. He watches the

tide of discussion, and dashes into it at once with all the tact of

the forum or the bar. He has art, argument, sarcasm, pathos,--all that

first-rate men show in their master efforts."

His readiness was admirably illustrated in the running debate with

Captain Rynders, a ward politician and gambler of New York, who led a

gang of roughs with the intention of breaking up the meeting of the

American Anti-slavery Society in New York City, May 7, 1850. The

newspapers had announced the proposed meeting in language calculated

to excite riot. Rynders packed the meeting with rowdies, and himself

occupied a seat on the platform. Some remark by Mr. Garrison, the

first speaker, provoked a demonstration of hostility. When this was

finally quelled by a promise to permit one of the Rynders party to

reply, Mr. Garrison finished his speech. He was followed by a prosy

individual, who branded the negro as brother to the monkey. Douglass,

perceiving that the speaker was wearying even his own friends,

intervened at an opportune moment, captured the audience by a timely

display of wit, and then improved the occasion by a long and effective

speech. When Douglass offered himself as a refutation of the last

speaker's argument, Rynders replied that Douglass was half white.

Douglass thereupon greeted Rynders as his half-brother, and made this

expression the catchword of his speech. When Rynders interrupted from

time to time, he was silenced with a laugh. He appears to have been

a somewhat philosophic scoundrel, with an appreciation of humor that

permitted the meeting to proceed to an orderly close. Douglass's

speech was the feature of the evening. "That gifted man," said

Garrison, in whose \_Life and Times\_ a graphic description of this

famous meeting is given, "effectually put to shame his assailants by

his wit and eloquence."

A speech delivered by Douglass at Concord, New Hampshire, is thus

described by another writer: "He gradually let out the outraged

humanity that was laboring in him, in indignant and terrible

speech.... There was great oratory in his speech, but more of dignity

and earnestness than what we call eloquence. He was an insurgent

slave, taking hold on the rights of speech, and charging on his

tyrants the bondage of his race."

In Holland's biography of Douglass extracts are given from letters

of distinguished contemporaries who knew the orator. Colonel T.W.

Higginson writes thus: "I have hardly heard his equal, in grasp upon

an audience, in dramatic presentation, in striking at the pith of an

ethical question, and in single [signal] illustrations and examples."

Another writes, in reference to the impromptu speech delivered at the

meeting at Rochester on the death of Lincoln: "I have heard Webster

and Clay in their best moments, Channing and Beecher in their highest

inspirations. I never heard truer eloquence. I never saw profounder

impression."

The published speeches of Douglass, of which examples may be found

scattered throughout his various autobiographies, reveal something of

the powers thus characterized, though, like other printed speeches,

they lose by being put in type. But one can easily imagine their

effect upon a sympathetic or receptive audience, when delivered with

flashing eye and deep-toned resonant voice by a man whose complexion

and past history gave him the highest right to describe and denounce

the iniquities of slavery and contend for the rights of a race. In

later years, when brighter days had dawned for his people, and age

had dimmed the recollection of his sufferings and tempered his

animosities, he became more charitable to his old enemies; but in the

vigor of his manhood, with the memory of his wrongs and those of his

race fresh upon him, he possessed that indispensable quality of the

true reformer: he went straight to the root of the evil, and made no

admissions and no compromises. Slavery for him was conceived in greed,

born in sin, cradled in shame, and worthy of utter and relentless

condemnation. He had the quality of directness and simplicity. When

Collins would have turned the abolition influence to the support of a

communistic scheme, Douglass opposed it vehemently. Slavery was the

evil they were fighting, and their cause would be rendered still more

unpopular if they ran after strange gods.

When Garrison pleaded for the rights of man, when Phillips with golden

eloquence preached the doctrine of humanity and progress, men approved

and applauded. When Parker painted the moral baseness of the times,

men acquiesced shamefacedly. When Channing preached the gospel of

love, they wished the dream might become a reality. But, when Douglass

told the story of his wrongs and those of his brethren in bondage,

they felt that here indeed was slavery embodied, here was an argument

for freedom that could not be gainsaid, that the race that could

produce in slavery such a man as Frederick Douglass must surely be

worthy of freedom.

What Douglass's platform utterances in later years lacked of the

vehemence and fire of his earlier speeches, they made up in wisdom and

mature judgment. There is a note of exultation in his speeches just

after the war. Jehovah had triumphed, his people were free. He had

seen the Red Sea of blood open and let them pass, and engulf the enemy

who pursued them.

Among the most noteworthy of Douglass's later addresses were the

oration at the unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument to Abraham Lincoln

in Washington in 1876, which may be found in his \_Life and Times\_;

the address on Decoration Day, New York, 1878; his eulogy on Wendell

Phillips, printed in Austin's \_Life and Times of Wendell Phillips\_;

and the speech on the death of Garrison, June, 1879. He lectured in

the Parker Fraternity Course in Boston, delivered numerous addresses

to gatherings of colored men, spoke at public dinners and woman

suffrage meetings, and retained his hold upon the interest of the

public down to the very day of his death.

XII.

With the full enfranchisement of his people, Douglass entered upon

what may be called the third epoch of his career, that of fruition.

Not every worthy life receives its reward in this world; but Douglass,

having fought the good fight, was now singled out, by virtue of his

prominence, for various honors and emoluments at the hands of the

public. He was urged by many friends to take up his residence in some

Southern district and run for Congress; but from modesty or some doubt

of his fitness--which one would think he need not have felt--and the

consideration that his people needed an advocate at the North to keep

alive there the friendship and zeal for liberty that had accomplished

so much for his race, he did not adopt the suggestion.

In 1860 [1870] Douglass moved to Washington, and began [took over] the

publication of the \_New National Era\_, a weekly paper devoted to the

interests of the colored race. The venture did not receive the support

hoped for; and the paper was turned over to Douglass's two [oldest]

sons, Lewis and Frederick, and was finally abandoned [in 1874],

Douglass having sunk about ten thousand dollars in the enterprise.

Later newspapers for circulation among the colored people have proved

more successful; and it ought to be a matter of interest that the race

which thirty years ago could not support one publication, edited by

its most prominent man, now maintains several hundred newspapers which

make their appearance regularly.

In 1871 Douglass was elected president of the Freedmans Bank.

This ill-starred venture was then apparently in the full tide of

prosperity, and promised to be a great lever in the uplifting of

the submerged race. Douglass, soon after his election as president,

discovered the insolvency of the institution, and insisted that it be

closed up. The negro was in the hands of his friends, and was destined

to suffer for their mistakes as well as his own.

Other honors that fell to Douglass were less empty than the presidency

of a bankrupt bank. In 1870 he was appointed by President Grant a

member of the Santo Domingo Commission, the object of which was to

arrange terms for the annexation of the mulatto republic to the Union.

Some of the best friends of the colored race, among them Senator

Sumner, opposed this step; but Douglass maintained that to receive

Santo Domingo as a State would add to its strength and importance. The

scheme ultimately fell through, whether for the good or ill of Santo

Domingo can best be judged when the results of more recent annexation

schemes [1898: Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, Hawaii, and \_de

facto\_ Cuba] become apparent. Douglass went to Santo Domingo on an

American man-of-war, in the company of three other commissioners. In

his \_Life and Times\_ he draws a pleasing contrast between some of his

earlier experiences in travelling, and the terms of cordial intimacy

upon which, as the representative of a nation which a few years before

had denied him a passport, he was now received in the company of able

and distinguished gentlemen.

On his return to the United States Douglass received from President

Grant an appointment as member of the legislative council, or upper

house of the legislature, of the District of Columbia, where he served

for a short time, until other engagements demanded his resignation,

[one of] his son[s] being appointed to fill out his term. To this

appointment Douglass owed the title of "Honorable," subsequently

applied to him.

In 1872 Douglass presided over and addressed a convention of colored

men at New Orleans, and urged them to support President Grant for

renomination. He was elected a presidential elector for New York,

and on the meeting of the electoral college in Albany, after Grant's

triumphant re-election, received a further mark of confidence and

esteem in the appointment at the hands of his fellow-electors to carry

the sealed vote to Washington. Douglass sought no personal reward

for his services in this campaign, but to his influence was due the

appointment of several of his friends to higher positions than had

ever theretofore been held in this country by colored men.

When R. B. Hayes was nominated for President, Douglass again took the

stump, and received as a reward the honorable and lucrative office

of Marshal of the United States for the District of Columbia. This

appointment was not agreeable to the white people of the District,

whose sympathies were largely pro-slavery; and an effort was made to

have its confirmation defeated in the Senate. The appointment was

confirmed, however; and Douglass served his term of four years, in

spite of numerous efforts to bring about his removal.

In 1879 the hard conditions under which the negroes in the South

were compelled to live led to a movement to promote an exodus of

the colored people to the North and West, in the search for better

opportunities. The white people of the South, alarmed at the prospect

of losing their labor, were glad to welcome Douglass when he went

among them to oppose this movement, which he at that time considered

detrimental to the true interests of the colored population.

Under the Garfield administration Douglass was appointed in May, 1881,

recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia. He held this very

lucrative office through the terms of Presidents Garfìeld and Arthur

and until removed by President Cleveland in 1886, having served nearly

a year after Cleveland's inauguration. In 1889 he was appointed by

President Harrison as minister resident and consul-general to the

Republic of Hayti, in which capacity he acted until 1891, when he

resigned and returned permanently to Washington. The writer has heard

him speak with enthusiasm of the substantial progress made by the

Haytians in the arts of government and civilization, and with

indignation of what he considered slanders against the island, due to

ignorance or prejudice. When it was suggested to Douglass that the

Haytians were given to revolution as a mode of expressing disapproval

of their rulers, he replied that a four years' rebellion had been

fought and two Presidents assassinated in the United States during a

comparatively peaceful political period in Hayti. His last official

connection with the Black Republic was at the World's Columbian

Exposition at Chicago in 1893, where he acted as agent in charge

of the Haytian Building and the very creditable exhibit therein

contained. His stately figure, which age had not bowed, his strong

dark face, and his head of thick white hair made him one of the

conspicuous features of the Exposition; and many a visitor took

advantage of the occasion to recall old acquaintance made in the

stirring anti-slavery days.

In 1878 he revisited the Lloyd plantation in Maryland, where he had

spent part of his youth, and an affecting meeting took place between

him and Thomas Auld, whom he had once called master. Once in former

years he had been sought out by the good lady who in his childhood had

taught him to read. Nowhere more than in his own accounts of these

meetings does the essentially affectionate and forgiving character of

Douglass and his race become apparent, and one cannot refrain from

thinking that a different state of affairs might prevail in the

Southern States if other methods than those at present in vogue were

used to regulate the relations between the two races and their various

admixtures that make up the Southern population.

In June, 1879, a bronze bust of Douglass was erected in Sibley Hall of

Rochester University as a tribute to one who had shed lustre on the

city. In 1882 occurred the death of Douglass's first wife, whom he had

married in New York immediately after his escape from slavery, and who

had been his faithful companion through so many years of stress and

struggle. In the same year his \_Life and Times\_ was published. In 1884

he married Miss Helen Pitts, a white woman of culture and refinement.

There was some criticism of this step by white people who did not

approve of the admixture of the races, and by colored persons who

thought their leader had slighted his own people when he overlooked

the many worthy and accomplished women among them. But Douglass, to

the extent that he noticed these strictures at all, declared that he

had devoted his life to breaking down the color line, and that he did

not know any more effectual way to accomplish it; that he was white by

half his blood, and, as he had given most of his life to his mothers

race, he claimed the right to dispose of the remnant as he saw fit.

The latter years of his life were spent at his beautiful home known as

Cedar Hill, on Anacostia Heights, near Washington, amid all

"that which should accompany old age,

As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."

He possessed strong and attractive social qualities, and his home

formed a Mecca for the advanced and aspiring of his race. He was

a skilful violinist, and derived great pleasure from the valuable

instrument he possessed. A wholesome atmosphere always surrounded him.

He had never used tobacco or strong liquors, and was clean of speech

and pure in life.

He died at his home in Washington, February 20, 1895. He had been

perfectly well during the day, and was supposed to be in excellent

health. He had attended both the forenoon and afternoon sessions of

the Women's National Council, then in session at Washington, and had

been a conspicuous figure in the audience. On his return home, while

speaking to his wife in the hallway of his house, he suddenly fell,

and before assistance could be given he had passed away.

His death brought forth many expressions from the press of the land,

reflecting the high esteem in which he had been held by the public

for a generation. In various cities meetings were held, at which

resolutions of sorrow and appreciation were passed, and delegations

appointed to attend his funeral. In the United States Senate a

resolution was offered reciting that in the person of the late

Frederick Douglass death had borne away a most illustrious citizen,

and permitting the body to lie in state in the rotunda of the Capitol

on Sunday. The immediate consideration of the resolution was asked

for. Mr. Gorman, of Maryland, the State which Douglass honored by his

birth, objected; and the resolution went over.

Douglass's funeral took place on February 25, 1895, at the

Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, and was

the occasion of a greater outpouring of colored people than had taken

place in Washington since the unveiling of the Lincoln emancipation

statue in 1878. The body was taken from Cedar Hill to the church at

half-past nine in the morning; and from that hour until noon thousands

of persons, including many white people, passed in double file through

the building and viewed the body, which was in charge of a guard of

honor composed of members of a colored camp of the Sons of Veterans.

The church was crowded when the services began, and several thousands

could not obtain admittance. Delegations, one of them a hundred

strong, were present from a dozen cities. Among the numerous floral

tributes was a magnificent shield of roses, orchids, and palms, sent

by the Haytian government through its minister. Another tribute was

from the son of his old master. Among the friends of the deceased

present were Senators Sherman and Hoar, Justice Harlan of the Supreme

Court, Miss Susan B. Anthony, and Miss May Wright Sewall, president

of the Women's National Council. The temporary pall-bearers were

ex-Senator B. K. Bruce and other prominent colored men of Washington.

The sermon was preached by Rev. J. G. Jenifer. John E. Hutchinson, the

last of the famous Hutchinson family of abolition singers, who with

his sister accompanied Douglass on his first voyage to England, sang

two requiem solos, and told some touching stories of their old-time

friendship. The remains were removed to Douglass's former home in

Rochester, where he was buried with unusual public honors.

In November, 1894, a movement was begun in Rochester, under the

leadership of J. W. Thompson, with a view to erect a monument in

memory of the colored soldiers and sailors who had fallen during the

Civil War. This project had the hearty support and assistance of

Douglass; and upon his death the plan was changed, and a monument to

Douglass himself decided upon. A contribution of one thousand dollars

from the Haytian government and an appropriation of three thousand

dollars from the State of New York assured the success of the plan.

September 15, 1898, was the date set for the unveiling of the

monument; but, owing to delay in the delivery of the statue, only a

part of the contemplated exercises took place. The monument, complete

with the exception of the statue which was to surmount it, was

formally turned over to the city, the presentation speech being made

by Charles P. Lee of Rochester. A solo and chorus composed for the

occasion were sung, an original poem read by T. Thomas Fortune, and

addresses delivered by John C. Dancy and John H. Smyth. Joseph H.

Douglass, a talented grandson of the orator, played a violin solo, and

Miss Susan B. Anthony recalled some reminiscences of Douglass in the

early anti-slavery days.

In June, 1899, the bronze statue of Douglass, by Sidney W. Edwards,

was installed with impressive ceremonies. The movement thus to

perpetuate the memory of Douglass had taken rise among a little band

of men of his own race, but the whole people of Rochester claimed

the right to participate in doing honor to their distinguished

fellow-citizen. The city assumed a holiday aspect. A parade of

military and civic societies was held, and an appropriate programme

rendered at the unveiling of the monument. Governor Roosevelt of New

York delivered an address; and the occasion took a memorable place in

the annals of Rochester, of which city Douglass had said, "I shall

always feel more at home there than anywhere else in this country."

In March, 1895, a few weeks after the death of Douglass, Theodore

Tilton, his personal friend for many years, published in Paris, of

which city he was then a resident, a volume of \_Sonnets to the Memory

of Frederick Douglass\_, from which the following lines are quoted as

the estimate of a contemporary and a fitting epilogue to this brief

sketch of so long and full a life:

"I knew the noblest giants of my day,

And \_he\_ was \_of\_ them--strong amid the strong:

But gentle too: for though he suffered wrong,

Yet the wrong-doer never heard him say,

'Thee also do I hate.' ...

A lover's lay--

No dirge--no doleful requiem song--

Is what I owe him; for I loved him long;

As dearly as a younger brother may.

Proud is the happy grief with which I sing;

For, O my Country! in the paths of men

There never walked a grander man than he!

He was a peer of princes--yea, a king!

Crowned in the shambles and the prison-pen!

The noblest Slave that ever God set free!"

Bibliography

The only original sources of information concerning the early life of

Frederick Douglass are the three autobiographies published by him

at various times; and the present writer, like all others who have

written of Mr. Douglass, has had to depend upon this personal record

for the incidents of Mr. Douglass's life in slavery. As to the second

period of his life, his public career as anti-slavery orator and

agitator, the sources of information are more numerous and varied. The

biographies of noted abolitionists whose lives ran from time to time

in parallel lines with his make very full reference to Douglass's

services in their common cause, the one giving the greatest detail

being the very complete and admirable \_Life and Times of William Lloyd

Garrison\_, by his sons, which is in effect an exhaustive history of

the Garrisonian movement for abolition.

The files of the \_Liberator\_, Mr. Garrison's paper, which can be

found in a number of the principal public libraries of the country,

constitute a vast storehouse of information concerning the labors of

the American Anti-slavery Society, with which Douglass was identified

from 1843 to 1847, the latter being the year in which he gave up

his employment as agent of the society and established his paper

at Rochester. Many letters from Mr. Douglass's pen appeared in the

\_Liberator\_ during this period.

Mr. Douglass's own memories are embraced in three separate volumes,

published at wide intervals, each succeeding volume being a revision

of the preceding work, with various additions and omissions.

I. \_Narrative of Frederick Douglass\_. Writen by himself. (Boston,

1845: The American Anti-slavery Society.) Numerous editions of this

book were printed, and translations published in Germany and in

France.

II. \_My Bondage and My Freedom\_. (New York and Auburn, 1855: Miller,

Orton & Mulligan.) This second of Mr. Douglass's autobiographies has a

well-written and appreciative introduction by James M'Cune Smith

and an appendix containing extracts from Mr. Douglass's speeches on

slavery.

III. \_Recollections of the Anti-slavery Conflict\_. By Samuel J. May.

(Boston, 1869: Fields, Osgood & Co.) Collected papers by a veteran

abolitionist; contains an appreciative sketch of Douglass.

IV. \_History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America\_. By

Henry Wilson. 3 vols. (Boston, 1872: James R. Osgood & Co.) The author

presents an admirable summary of the life and mission of Mr. Douglass.

V. \_William Lloyd Garrison and His Times\_. By Oliver Johnson.

(Boston, 1881: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) One of the best works on the

anti-slavery agitation, by one of its most able, active and courageous

promoters.

VI. \_Century Magazine\_, November, 1881, "My Escape from Slavery." By

Frederick Douglass.

VII. \_Life and Times of Frederick Douglass\_. Written by himself.

(Hartford, 1882: Park Publishing Company.)

VIII. \_History of the Negro Race in America\_. By George W. Williams.

2 vols. (New York, 1883: G. P. Putnam's Sons.) This exhaustive and

scholarly work contains an estimate of Douglass's career by an

Afro-American author.

IX. \_The Life and Times of Wendell Phillips\_. By George Lowell Austin.

(Boston, 1888: Lee & Shepard.) Contains a eulogy on Wendell Phillips

by Mr. Douglass.

X. \_Life and Times of William Lloyd Garrison\_. By his children. 4

vols. (New York, 1889: The Century Company. London: T. Fisher Unwin.)

Here are many details of the public services of Mr. Douglass,--his

relations to the Garrisonian abolitionists, his political views, his

oratory, etc.

XI. \_The Cosmopolitan\_, August, 1889. "Reminiscences." By Frederick

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XII. \_Frederick Douglass, the Colored Orator\_. By Frederick May

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