

Gentlemen of the Convention:

I thank you for the honor you have just conferred on me, though diffident of my ability to properly discharge the responsible duties that will devolve . . .” discharge of my duty as a presiding officer, I hope that you will make proper allowances for the difficulties of my position, and not judge me too harshly.

Gentlemen, I am glad to see you here. The times are big with events deeply concerning us. Whilst thankful to Providence for the good He is doing for us through the instrumentality of men, yet it does not follow, because so much is being done for us, that we can do nothing for ourselves.

I have no doubt that this war will eventuate in the freedom of every black man in the country. Freedom from Chains and the Lash. But alas! Gentlemen, slavery leaves its sting behind it in ignorance, and its attendant vices,—hateful progeny of the great monster called slavery.

It is for men who, like you, stand forth the representatives of their race, to wage war against the evil heritage that slavery has left us. If we would be great, we must be good. “Righteousness exalts a nation, whilst sin is a reproach to any people.”

In our peculiar position, it will not suffice that we are as good as other people. We must be better. We must be on the average more industrious, sober, and truthful, to the end, that by challenging comparison we may confound our enemies, and place potent arguments in the hands of our friends.

“Knowledge is power.” Therefore we must get education for ourselves and children. Each one of us ought to consider the character and elevation of the colored people of Kansas as in his own keeping, and labor with that view. Let each of us, as far as in us lies, endeavor to leaven the mass with new ideas and noble aspirations. Let each one, in his loyalty, be an example unto others, for precept without example is vain mockery.

Gentlemen, in conclusion, allow me to say that I heartily concur with the gentlemen who called this Convention, and anticipate much good from its deliberations. Again, thanking you for the honor conferred on me, I now enter on the discharge of the duties confided to my care.

* *Editors Note:* Text mutilation in the original copy of this proceedings has prevented inclusion of at least one line of sentence following the word ‘devolve’.

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