

Mrs. Truth commenced her discourse by singing a hymn beginning with

I am pleading for my people,
A poor, down-trodden race.

After the hymn was finished, she detailed much of her practical experience as a slave. Some twenty-five years have elapsed since she received her freedom, but the brutality of the Dutch family, whose slave she was, had not been effaced by time. In her heathen despair she used to pray to God that he would kill all the white people. She prayed to God, but she did not know what or who the Divine being was. In her mind he was like Napoleon or General Washington. When her soul was lighted by the influx of celestial love, her nature changed: where she had before showered curses she called down blessings. She went on to talk of the condition of the coloured people and their prospects. They were gradually being thrust out from every menial occupation by their white brethren, but she believed this was ominous of a better future. They were being prepared for some great change that would take place ere long. She was decidedly opposed to the colonization project: they must stay and a short time would show that that was the best course.— When the coloured people were waiters and did all the common and lower kinds of work the streets were clean: the servants scraped the dirt from the corners, swept out the gutters and half-way across the streets. Now, white folk clean boots, wait at table, be about lazy and beg cold victuals. The coloured people did that sometimes too—but not to keep boarders on it. [Laughter.] Well, in those times, twenty-five or thirty years ago, the streets

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were kept nice and clean without costing the people a penny. Now the white people have taken it in hand, the dirt lies in the streets till it gets too thick, and flies all about into the shops and people's eyes and then they sift water all over it, and make it into mud, and that's what they do over and over again, without ever dreaming of such an easy thing as taking it away. In the course of time it becomes too thick, and too big a nuisance and then they go to work right straight off with picks and crow bars, and pull up the stones above the dirt and then go on again. [Laughter.] Not long ago nobody but coloured people were coachmen and barbers, but now they have white Pompeys with the [livery] coats on and poor black Pompey goes to the wall. My coloured brothers and sisters, there's a remedy for this: where I was lately lecturing out in Pennsylvania the farmers wanted good men and women to work their farms on shares for them. Why can't you go out there [...] and depend upon it in the course of time you will get to be independent. She asked the audience to review the history of the past fifty years and although the course was slow, the coloured race had vastly improved and that menial position to which nature seemed to have consigned them was rapidly being changed for the better. How long ago was it that a coloured woman could address a white audience of a thousand people and be listened to with respectful attention. These things were signs of the times. The papers rarely recorded crimes committed by her race, though they often teemed with those committed against them. She hoped her people would thus continue to put the white people to the [blush.] Mrs. Truth is something

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of a reformer in her way. She commented somewhat severely on the modern style of preaching the Gospel. The parsons went away into Egypt among the bones of dead Pharaohs and mummies and talked about what happened thousands of years ago but quite forgot that the living present around them teemed with the sternest realities. Many of the churches were big lumbering things, covering up costly space and doing good to no one. While many of the citizens of this metropolis were living in low dens and skylighted garrets, these immense buildings, which would comfortably lodge them were about one-third filled once in the week and for the other six days allowed to lie unoccupied and a dead loss. And then the preachers too came in for a share of her satire. Big Greek-crammed [...mouthing] men who, for many a long century, had been befogging the world, and getting its affairs into the most terrible snarl and confusion, and then when women came in to their assistance, cried 'shame on women!' They liked the fat and easy work of preaching and entangling too well not to feel alarmed when women attempt to set matters aright. She conceived that women were peculiarly adapted to fill the talking professions, and men should no longer unsex themselves by leaving the plow and the plane, for the pulpit and the platform. She hoped all of her sex would set to work and drag the world right side up, disentangle it from the snarl which men have willfully got it into, and set matters in general aright, and then keep them so. They could only do this by being united and resolutely putting their shoulders to the wheel.

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