

CHAPTER IX.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MR. THOMPSON AND THE HAYTIEN GOVERNMENT.

Rochester, N. Y., October 11, 1897.

Hon. W. F. Powell, Legation of the United States, Port Au
Prince, Hayti:

My Dear Sir—I am a stranger to you. I desire to introduce myself by saying that I am engaged at this time in trying to raise funds for the purpose of erecting a monument in this city in memory of the late Frederick Douglass, as you will see by the enclosed clippings. I write you asking that you use your influence with President Sam in regard to the matter as I have also written to him to-day asking a contribution from his government because Mr. Douglass was at one time Minister, representing this government at Port-au-Prince. He also represented the government of Hayti at the World's Fair at Chicago. He was indeed faithful to his trust. Anything you can do to help along the project will be greatly appreciated by me.

Yours very truly,

JOHN W. THOMPSON.

In answer to Mr. Thompson's first letter to Hon. W. F. Powell the following was received:

Legation of the United States,

Port-au-Prince, Hayti, December 15, 1897.

Mr. John W. Thompson, Rochester, N. Y.:

Sir—Your favor of November 27 reached me in this mail, in which you request that I shall do all in my power to get Hayti represented in the contribution of funds for the pur-

pose of erecting a monument to commemorate the deeds and virtues of the Hon. Frederick Douglass, at one time minister resident and consul-general to this republic. My instructions are of such a character that I cannot comply with the request you have made to me, but whatever I can do in an unofficial way I will be glad to do. With you I think too much honor cannot be done to the dead hero, whose name should not only be imbedded in the marble monument you propose to erect, but should be enshrined in the hearts of not only this, but of future generations.

Each child should be taught from its infancy until it has gained the estate of manhood or womanhood of the great virtues possessed by the lamented Douglass. We, as a race, are prone too often to forget those who have been the exponents of that race in the past. Unless such love is engendered on the part of the living to the dead, our pride of race will soon be extinct.

I cheerfully wish you success in this great and grand movement on your part toward the illustrious dead. As I have already stated, in an unofficial way my services are at your command. I have the honor to remain.

Your obedient servant,

W. F. POWELL.

J. W. Thompson made this reply to Mr. Powell's letter of December 15, 1897:

Rochester, N. Y., December 15, 1897.

Hon. W. F. Powell, Legation of the United States, Hayti:

My Dear Sir—I am truly grateful to you for the prompt attention given my letter. I regret that your instructions are of such a character as to make you unable to act in an official way. You can doubtless do much, however, in an unofficial way which might bring about some good results. I am glad you appreciate my efforts to erect a monument in memory

of the hero of our race and one who we can say that this country is better because he lived in it and our city is much the richer because his remains rest within its walls, and his monument though silent shall be magnificent and an inspiration to generations yet unborn. Do the best you can and remember nothing would be more pleasing to me than to have Hayti represented by a contribution to this fund.

Yours very truly,
JOHN W THOMPSON.

Hon. Brutus St. Victor's note to Hon. W F. Powell, notifying him of the contribution to the Mounment Fund, was as follows:

Department of State for Foreign Relations,
Port-au-Prince, February 11, 1898.

Mr. Minister—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of January 20 last, by which you have transmitted to me a copy of the one you received from Mr. John W. Thompson, relative to the project for the erection of a monument to the Honorable Frederick Douglass, who was Minister Resident of the United States to Hayti, at the same time you make an appeal for that object to all the admirers of that great American citizen of the same race as he.

I had at heart, Mr. Minister, to submit the project to the Council of Secretaries of State, under the presidency of His Excellency the President of the Republic, and I am happy to announce to you that the government associating itself to the thoughts of those who have had the initiative and wishing to contribute towards its realization, takes part in the subscription opened for the sum of one thousand dollars.

Please accept, Mr. Minister, the assurances of my high consideration.

BRUTUS ST. VICTOR.



SCENE AT THE CORNER STONE LAYING.

Hon. W. F. Powell's acknowledgement of the contribution, was as follows:

Legation of the United States,
Port-au-Prince, Hayti, March 21, 1898.

Honorable Brutus St. Victor, Secretary of State for Foreign
Affairs, Port-au-Prince, Hayti:

Sir—I note with pleasure your dispatch of March 5, 1898, that your government has directed you to inform me that it desires to be commemorated in the monument about to be erected by the citizens of the United States, in the city of Rochester, N. Y., a monument of one of the ablest of America's sons, Frederick Douglass, one whose voice was ever raised in behalf of the oppressed not only of his own race, but that of others of other climes. He claimed for that race with which he was identified, that if equal advantage be given it in the race of life, it would achieve equally great results, as a proof of this, it was his pride to point to the great results obtained by your Republic under the most adverse circumstances, from the day that you won your independence from one of the great nations of the world to the present time. That under all difficulties that have since beset you, isolated as it were from the great family of nations, you have maintained your integrity, and with it the honor of your Republic, neither of which have become tarnished or diminished by age, until to-day you stand as the recognized factor of what a race can achieve under the blissful light of freedom, of independence.

The last days of his life, he often referred to the happy hours he passed in your midst as the representative of a government that at one time denied to him and the members of his race the common attributes pertaining to man.

Permit me, sir, to express to you in behalf of Mr. Thompson, and the committee associated with him, and to you, Mr.

Minister, personally, their thanks as well as my own for this grateful act to this illustrious American citizen.

Accept, Mr. Minister, my high regard and personal esteem, I have the honor to be, sir,

Your obedient servant,
W. F. POWELL.

March 29 Mr. Thompson received the following:

Legation of the United States,
Port-au-Prince, Hayti, March 21, 1898.

Mr. J. W. Thompson, Chairman Douglass Monument Fund,
Rochester, N. Y.:

Sir—I am happy to inform you that the Haytien government has contributed to the monument fund to the memory of the late Frederick Douglass the sum of \$1,000. This sum I will send to you by draft upon the return of the Foreign Secretary. If you have this correspondence published have the same also inserted in some of our race papers, as the "Age," or the "Colored American." Be kind enough to send two or three copies of the same to hand to members of the Cabinet. At the same time will you also send me a copy of paper that contained my reply to your previous letter. I am very glad, sir, this amount has been secured and congratulate you upon the same and a speedy erection of the monument, and with it a happy conclusion of your labor and that of the committee associated with you.

I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,
W. F. POWELL.

Legation of the United States,
Port-au-Prince, Hayti, April 13, 1898.

Hon. John Sherman, Secretary of State, Washington, D. C.:

Sir—I respectfully inform the department that this re-

public has donated the sum of one thousand dollars towards the erection of a monument by the citizens of Rochester in that city, to the memory of the late Hon. Frederick Douglass, at one time Minister Resident and Consul-General here.

I inclose copies of correspondence that has taken place between the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the Legation.

I have the honor, sir, etc., etc.,

W F. POWELL.

Legation of the United States,
Port-au-Prince, Hayti, August 15, 1898.

Mr. J. W Thompson, Chairman Douglass Monument Fund,
Rochester, N. Y.

Sir—I have sent by this mail to the State Department, Washington, the promised draft from the Haytien government. I will endeavor to send also photograph of Cabinet by this mail. I trust your imposing exercises in unveiling the monument of the illustrious Douglass will be crowned with success.

Respectfully yours,

W. F. POWELL.

Department of State,
Washington, April 29, 1898.

His Honor, the Mayor of Rochester, N. Y.:

Sir—I enclose for the information of the citizens of Rochester copy of a dispatch from our Minister to Hayti, reporting that that Republic has donated one thousand dollars toward the erection of a monument in your city to the late Frederick Douglass, at one time Minister Resident and Consul General to Hayti.

Respectfully yours,

J. B. MOORE,

Acting Secretary.

Department of State,
Washington, August 31, 1898.

J. W. Thompson, Esquire, Chairman Douglass Monument
Committee:

Sir—Referring to the Department's letter of April 29 last to the Mayor of Rochester, and by him referred to your committee, whereby the information was conveyed that the government of the Republic of Hayti would donate the sum of \$1,000.00 towards the erection at Rochester of a monument in commemoration of the late Frederick Douglass, I have now to enclose, as Hayti's contribution to the above object, a draft, No. 2,515, for \$990.10, United States currency, drawn by Ch. Weymann & Company, Port-au-Prince, August 22, 1898, on Messrs. Lyon & Company, New York, to the order of the Secretary of State, Washington, and by me endorsed to the order of the Douglass Monument Committee, Rochester, N. Y., which draft was handed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hayti to the Minister of the United States at Port-au-Prince and was by the latter forwarded to this Department.

I shall be pleased to have you acknowledge its receipt.

Respectfully yours,

J. B. MOORE,
Acting Secretary.

J. W. Thompson tendered thanks to the government of Hayti, and received the following from Washington:

Department of State,
Washington, September 7, 1898.

Jchn W. Thompson, Esquire, Chairman of the Douglass
Monument Committee:

Sir—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3d instant, expressing gratitude for the donation made by the Haytien government to the Douglass monument fund.

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A copy of your letter has been forwarded to our Legation
at Port-au-Prince.

Respectfully yours,
J. B. MOORE,
Acting Secretary.

Department of State,
Washington, May 18, 1898.

John W. Thompson, Esquire, Rochester, N. Y.:

Sir—In compliance with the request contained in your letter of the 16th instant, our Minister at Port-au-Prince has been instructed to present to the Haytien Foreign Office the thanks of the Frederick Douglass Monument Committee for the donation made by the government of Hayti to the erection of the monument to Mr. Douglass.

Respectfully yours,
J. B. MOORE,
Assistant Secretary.

Department of State,
Washington, July 12, 1898.

J. W. Thompson, Esquire, Chairman, Douglass Monument
Committee, Rochester, N. Y.:

Sir—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 7th instant asking that the United States Minister to Hayti be informed that the Douglass monument is to be unveiled on the 14th of September in your city and that he be requested to extend an invitation to the President and members of the Cabinet of Hayti to be present.

Copy of your letter has been transmitted to Mr. Powell with instructions to communicate the contents to the Haytien government.

Respectfully yours,
J. B. MOORE,
Acting Secretary.

Department of State,
Washington, August 17, 1898.

J. W. Thompson, Esquire, Chairman Douglass Monument
Committee, Rochester, N. Y.:

Sir—Referring to your letter of the 7th ultimo, and to the Department's reply of the 12th ultimo, I have now to inform you that our Minister at Port-au-Prince reports to the Department, under date of the 1st instant, that Mr. J. N. Leger, the Minister of Hayti at this capital, will represent the President of Hayti and his Cabinet at the unveiling of the Douglass monument at Rochester, N. Y.

Respectfully yours,
J. B. MOORE,
Acting Secretary.

CHAPTER X.

MUSICAL AND LITERARY ENTERTAINMENT AND DOUGLASS BIRTHDAY EXERCISES.

A pleasing literary and musical entertainment was given in Unitarian Church, May 11, 1898, for the benefit of the Douglass monument fund.

“Frederick Douglass” was the subject of an address by Mr. James M. E. O’Grady. He briefly but vividly and comprehensively sketched the life of the noted orator and emancipator, from its beginning as a slave on a Southern plantation to its peaceful conclusion in the Nation’s capital. In concluding Mr. O’Grady said:

“In summing up the career of Frederick Douglass, one is at a loss to select the capacity in which he excelled. He was great as an orator, as a writer, as a debator, and as an administrator of business affairs. As an orator he ranks in the first-class. Those who once heard him can never forget him. The impression left upon his hearers was indelible. His splendid personal appearance, his magnificent head, his graceful and appropriate gestures, his voice, sweet, low, persuasive, harsh, forbidding, sonorous or clarion-like, swayed his hearers at his sweet will. It is true that his greatest effect was upon his immediate hearers, and these he could move to laughter or to tears at his pleasure. He had great logic, deep sarcasm and inimitable wit.

“I well remember the impression made upon me upon the last occasion upon which I heard Douglass in Rochester. It was at an open air meeting held in Franklin Square, to celebrate Memorial Day. The sun shone brightly through the newly leafed trees upon an immense throng that almost completely filled the inclosure. On a stand in the center of the park stood the orator. He was then between 65 and 70 years of age, robust, rugged, and in the fullness of his manly

strength. For upwards of an hour he spoke most eloquently, holding the absolute attention of his hearers, and profoundly moving them with the pathos and patriotism of his utterances. To speak to and hold the attention of an audience in the open air is the greatest test to which a public speaker can be put; and I know of no man who could excel Douglass in this power.

“Many people rank Douglass higher as a writer than an orator, and believe that his work in this line will live longest. He was indefatigable as a worker. He entered in newspapers and did all the drudgery connected therewith in the early days. He cultivated a pure and graceful style, and the volume and felicity of his expression is really amazing to one who knows his history. He read far and wide, and was a hard student. He was a self-made man in every sense. He illustrated another exception in that he demonstrated the fact that it is not always necessary for a man to be a college graduate to succeed in literary life. Although university education was wanting to him, he made up for it by intense application to the work of college men. He never believed his education was finished, but was a student until the day of his death.

“To an American the lesson of this man’s life can never be lost. To rise from the lowliest and most hopeless condition to a position of great power among the rulers of the nation, by one’s own personal efforts, is possible only in the great republic founded upon the equality of all men before the law. And when the example is that of a member of a down trodden race, lifting himself from absolute human slavery and bondage, by self education and self effort, and against the greatest odds, to a point where he becomes the chosen constitutional instrument to receive and record the vote of the greatest state of the Union for the highest office of the nation, and the chosen representative of that nation

in the making of its treaty with a foreign country, how directly does it come home to us that our country is founded upon the very rock of human liberty. Truly will the work of this man live after him.

“His race can always point to him as a star of the first magnitude. What he was others within human limitation may become. His oratorical ability may be impossible of accomplishment, because they were God-given gifts; but the sweetness of his disposition, the uprightness of his character, his high sense of honor, and his honesty and integrity can be attained of all men. Not only his own race may profit by his example; all men, of whatever race or creed or color, can point to him with pride, as one of the noblest examples of human endeavor, to be emulated as long as the human character tends upwards towards the highest ideals.”

DOUGLASS BIRTHDAY EXERCISES.

Douglass birthday exercises were held at Plymouth Church, February 15, 1897, under the management of the Woman's Club, to commemorate the birthday anniversary of the foremost representative of the colored race. The object of this meeting was twofold: To preserve the memory and eulogize the life of Douglass and to further the project for erecting a monument to him.

Plymouth Congregational Church threw open its doors to such a meeting; and the spacious edifice was thronged. Every seat was taken and extra chairs were brought in and utilized in all available spaces. There were many colored people in the audience; and seated side by side with them were some of the representative citizens of Rochester.

Over the pew formerly occupied by Douglass and his family were emblematic decorations; and immediately in front of the pulpit was a large portrait of the man to whose memory nearly two thousand citizens of Rochester were assembled to do honor and reverence.

Susan B. Anthony presided, in itself an honor to the occasion. On her left was seated Rev. Anna Shaw, who had come on to Rochester to spend her fiftieth birthday with Miss Anthony, who to-day celebrates her seventy-seventh birthday anniversary. On Miss Anthony's right sat Mrs. Victoria Earle Mathews, who represents the National Association of Colored Women in the movement for the erection of a monument to Frederick Douglass. Others on the pulpit platform were Rev. William F. Kettle, pastor of Plymouth Church, and Mrs. R. J. Jeffrey, president of the local Colored Woman's Club.

In opening the meeting Miss Anthony said:

"I am very happy to be here to-night in Plymouth Church, not only because it is the church which Frederick Douglass and the members of his family attended, but because it is the church which my elder sister and my brother-in-law attended for many years; and as I used sometimes to accompany them I feel that I am not altogether a stranger in Plymouth Church.

"I think there is no one who remembers that magnificent figure of Frederick Douglass but cherishes the memory of one whom they estimated to be at least a very marked figure in their presence; a man who, if he had not had the taint of slavery in his veins, would have taken the very highest place as an orator and as a statesman in this city and in this country.

"I never shall forget what was said by him that night when the news reached us that Lincoln had been murdered. There was a meeting in City Hall. There were speeches by prominent men, ministers, the president of the University and others. None felt that the very soul of the matter had been touched, however, till someone called for Douglass. He made a speech that thrilled the heart and stirred the soul of every listener. But because of the taint of slavery that

brooded down upon him he had never before been recognized among his fellow men and women, until that night."

Later in the meeting Miss Anthony mentioned the names of the following Rochesterians among the few who in those days accorded Douglass the friendship due him as a man and a fellow human being: Amy Post, Ida Post, Miss Maria Porter, her brother, Samuel Porter.

Miss Anthony stated that when she promised to preside at the meeting she at once wrote to Elizabeth Cady Stanton, of the following Rochesterians among the few who in those assembled. Mrs. Stanton was a staunch friend of Douglass, who had championed the cause of equal suffrage for her in the first woman's political convention, called in Seneca Falls, July 19, 1848, winning a majority vote for Mrs. Stanton's proposition that the right of franchise was the first right of every individual from an assembly that had at first been opposed to it. Mrs. Stanton's reply, which was read by Miss Anthony, was as follows:

26 West Sixty-first Street,
New York, Feb. 13, 1897.

Dear Miss Anthony: For noble Frederick Douglass I have varied memories; sad for all he suffered from cruel prejudices against his race and the insults to his proud nature; and pleasant for the tender love and friendship of his noble soul. I love him as he loved me, for the indignities we alike endured. I am happy to learn that the people of Rochester, who would never treat him as a social equal when living, purpose to build a monument to his memory at last.

On a visit once at Peterboro, Douglass came there, too. Some Southern women guests wrote a note to Mr. Smith to know "if Douglass would sit in the parlor and at the dining table; if so they would remain in their rooms." My cousin replied: "Certainly, he will. I feel honored to have the greatest man that ever graduated from the 'Southern Insti-

tution' under my roof." When Douglass arrived, Cousin Gerrit met him with open arms and kissed him on either cheek. He stayed with us two weeks, and all that time the two ladies took their meals in their apartments, while the rest of us walked about the grounds, sat under the trees, played games and sang songs with Douglass, he playing the accompaniment on the guitar. Our ladies, in their solitude, no doubt often regretted that they were voluntary exiles from all our enjoyments.

I met Douglass for the last time in Paris, when he and his wife dined with my son Theodore. On parting he said: "You have been denied the rights of an American citizen because of your sex, I because of my color! I hope we shall stand on equal ground with the angels in heaven!" "Alas!" said I, "we better not be too sure of that; earthly prejudices die hard. There may be those who will write Peter a note to know if you and I are to be there—and if so they will take their meals in their own apartments!" How hateful any prejudice looks in retrospect! I am thankful I never had but one, and that one I have sedulously cultivated year by year. When I reach heaven I shall write a note to Peter to know if there are any religious bigots there—and if so to request them to stay in their own apartments, leaving the negroes, women, infidels, Socialists, Jews, Chinese and Indians free to roam whithersoever they will.

When in Paris, my son took Douglass to the Chamber of Deputies and introduced him to the member who had banished slavery from all the French colonies. His name I cannot recall. He is always spoken of as the William Lloyd Garrison of the Chamber. When he met Douglass, he, too threw his arms about him and kissed him on either cheek. "Ah!" said he, "you are the one American above all others I have longed to see!" Think of such a man born a slave in this republic! A political nonentity, a social pariah! in-

ferior in position to all ignorant white men and women! Then think of seventy-five years in such an atmosphere! It is a depressing thought to estimate his feelings; but infinitely worse to have been one of the number who helped thus to degrade a man. I never felt more deeply this hateful prejudice of color than when witnessing in an Episcopal church the administering of the communion: After a succession of white men and women had knelt at the altar, a splendid black man, who, dressed in new livery, looked like an African prince, so stately was his carriage as he walked up the aisle and knelt alone to receive the communion. A little white child under his care slowly followed and seated herself beside him. When the service ended, hand in hand they walked back to the negro pew! He was a man of unblemished virtue, respected by the whole community, loved and honored by the family he served; yet no Christian could celebrate the last supper in memory of Jesus by his side!

I sincerely wish the monument Rochester proposes to build in honor of Douglass might be a schoolhouse or a tenement for the poor. It seems a pity to raise so many useless shafts of marble and granite, while the homes of the poor, the schools and prisons are so overcrowded!

With best wishes to all assembled, and for many public honors to Frederick Douglass, an eloquent orator, a faithful friend and a lover of justice, liberty and equality for all mankind! No Parian marble too pure for his monument; no garlands too beautiful for his shrine!

With sincere love,

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON.

Applause greeted the reading of Mrs. Stanton's letter; and then Miss Anthony introduced as the speaker of the evening, Mrs. Victoria Earle Mathews, representing the National Association of Women, who made a tour through the country in the interests of the women of her race.

In presenting Mrs. Mathews the chairman told how, upon being introduced to her at the Unitarian Church the day before she had asked: "Mrs. Mathews, is it possible there is a drop of black blood in your veins?" "I tell you I was born a slave," was Mrs. Mathews' reply. "What were we thinking of," exclaimed Miss Anthony, "when fathers sold their own sons and daughters on the auction block and counted them merely as so much goods and chattels!"

Mrs. V E. Mathews expressed some embarrassment in addressing so large an audience, saying that nothing but the seriousness of her cause could prompt her to stand as a speaker upon the platform with Miss Susan B. Anthony and Miss Anna Shaw and attempt to address so large an audience.

After stating that she was the representative of a National movement of women of her race Mrs. Mathews drew a vivid picture of the condition of the mothers and young girls in the South, as they flock to the cities from the plantations and find their way to the slums. "What is being done for them" she asked. "What is to be done for them? Have you ever stopped to think of the seriousness of this question?"

Turning to a consideration of the proposed monument to the memory of Frederick Douglass the speaker took issue with Mrs. Stanton's suggestion of a utilitarian memorial, speaking in part as follows:

"Ours is a communion of tears. We know that our children are naked and ignorant and in need of schools; we know that there is great need of rescue and relief of homes; we do not underestimate the value of education; but as mothers we see the destiny and ambition of our children hanging in the balance, but as to a monument in memory of Frederick Douglass the colored people have one to whom they can point as an example, an incentive, to their children.

When it is known that worth and not power will be honored it will indeed stimulate a higher type of the youth of our race."

Rev. Anna Shaw beamed with enthusiasm as she rose to deliver the final address of the evening. She was glad that Mrs. Mathews, with her white face, still belonged to the African race. And the speaker expressed regret that she too had not a drop of black blood in her veins, so that she might take her sister by the hand and say: "I, too, am of your people."

Miss Shaw agreed with Mrs. Mathews on the monument question, saying:

"It is seldom that Mrs. Stanton makes a mistake; but she did so there, when she allowed her love of the utilitarian to prompt her to suggest a schoolhouse or a tenement house for a monument to the memory of Frederick Douglass. This monument is to be for the American people, to recall to them the greatness of this man, who was born a slave, but who lived to take his place among the noblest of human kind. The one thing we need is more monuments, not fewer.

"No, let him stand, magnificent in bronze, where people can see that wonderful, that colossal figure of him who, born a slave yet lived to die one of the foremost men in one of the foremost nations of the world; one at whose bier statesmen stood in silent reverence; one who lived the life of a man; born a slave, but not enslaved; one who stood firm for the principle of universal liberty, who recognized the great law of universal freedom; one who recognized that one only is our Father, even God, and that we are all brethren.

"Rochester will never have the opportunity to honor herself as she will have it in helping the colored citizens to erect a monument not only for Frederick Douglass and his race, but for all the American people."

Miss Susan B. Anthony then announced that a collection would be taken, the proceeds to be devoted to the Douglass Memorial Fund. Her apt and pointed eloquence in this line was not without its effect.