

THE City of Rochester, N. Y., unveils a very handsome monument of Frederick Douglass on Sept. 20. Douglass was perhaps the most famous Afro-American of the century. He was a statesman, almost, and an example of what a negro can make of himself, provided he has the determination, though, to be exact, it must be said that the good white blood in Douglass's veins should be given some of the credit, and, too, he had a white wife. But allowing for all this, when we come to consider the obstacles he had to overcome, it must be admitted that his achievements are none the less remarkable.

Douglass was born a slave on a Maryland plantation, but ran away as soon as he got big enough and found a domicile in New Bedford. Prior to this time, though a man grown, he had never had an opportunity to learn anything about reading or writing, and all his education—and he really was a well-educated man—dated from this time. There is a story about a kind lady who first took him in charge and taught him his letters and saw that he was started aright on the road of learning more.

The young man was overbright, learning very rapidly, but he never thought of active public life till one day by chance he was led to attend a meeting of Abolitionists near his home. That was long before the war, when Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison and others were agitating the freeing of the slaves. So young Douglass attended his first Abolitionist meeting, and so carried away was he by the vigorous eloquence of the speakers that he felt called upon to talk himself, though addressing a public meeting was something he had never done before. But he was filled with the enthusiasm of the moment; the memories of his own wrongs and those of his race spurred him on to eloquence, and he made an impassioned plea for his people that literally brought down the house. The young negro was as much surprised as any one at the success of his speech, but then and there he laid the way for long and faithful service to the Abolitionist cause, the leaders of which acknowledged him one of their most effective speakers.

Douglass was a born orator. His fame spread over all the country and even won him international renown. He went to England and talked for his people over there. He was warmly welcomed and indorsed by some of the most prominent men of the time. In Ireland he was welcomed by Daniel O'Connell, the greatest orator of Europe, who introduced him to an immense audience in Consultation Hall as "The Black O'Connell of the United States."

For more than twenty years preceding the civil war the voice of Frederick Douglass was heard from every platform in the Northern States in denunciation of the system of slavery. His addresses were a great intellectual entertainment. People who did not believe in his views would go to hear him, to be entertained, just as they would go to hear Edwin Booth play Hamlet.

He was a friend and counselor of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln issued the emancipa-

tion proclamation. Frederick Douglass did a great deal to educate the people of the North to a degree that rendered that proclamation possible and successful.

Frederick Douglass early made the City of Rochester, N. Y., his home, and Rochester remained his legal residence up to the day of his death. Whenever he voted, he voted there. His determination to do his duty, come what might, is illustrated in the following anecdote:

In 1866 the great Loyalist Convention was held at Philadelphia. The object of that convention was to facilitate reconstruction and hold the border States with the Republican Party. Every considerable city in the country was permitted to send delegates. The statesmen and orators of the North and of the border States were there. The people of the City of Rochester met in the City Hall to send a delegate to this convention. Henry Churchill was nominated. Henry Churchill had been a silver-gray Whig and a conservative Republican. The times demanded radicals then, and when the vote came a delegate arose and said he would like to know before he voted whether or not Mr. Churchill was radical. Mr. Churchill answered in the affirmative and was elected.

Immediately another delegate arose and said he was glad to learn that Mr. Churchill had become radical, and he thought he would like to have good company in going to this august convention. He said Rochester was entitled to two delegates instead of one, and he moved that Frederick Douglass be also elected a delegate, to be associated with Mr. Churchill in representing the City of Rochester in that convention. It was carried without a dissenting vote. But the next morning it was discovered that a storm was brewing. Telegrams came to Rochester from such men as Henry J. Raymond and other magnates of the Republican Party, advising that Mr. Douglass should stay away from this convention. It was feared that his presence there would drive off the border States. It was feared that it would raise the question of color, and prominent men were advised, if possible, to keep Mr. Douglass from getting his credentials.

Douglass had had nothing to do with his election, and knew nothing of it until it was all over, but on being consulted said he would go if furnished with credentials. The effort to prevent his receiving credentials failed, and Douglass got them and started for Philadelphia.

Everywhere on the way to the convention he received the cold shoulder, until, in the streets of Philadelphia, he met Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, who greeted him cordially, and told him he was glad he was there. Then he met Charles Sumner and Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, who also expressed their pleasure at seeing him. The fear that Douglass, by his presence in the convention, would be an injury to the cause was not well grounded. He was the favorite of that body. Although the orators of the Republican Party of the country were there in that convention, the two great speeches made there on that occasion were made by Frederick Douglass. One of them was inside the walls of the convention, and the other was an open-air speech on Chestnut Street, in the City of Philadelphia.



STATUE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS TO BE UNVEILED AT ROCHESTER, N. Y., ON SEPT. 20.

Frederick Douglass was always held in great esteem by the citizens of Rochester, though he took no part in local politics, and was never a candidate for office of his own seeking.

Soon after the election of Mr. Lincoln to the Presidency, Mr. Douglass was by him appointed to the office of Marshal of the District of Columbia. When that office expired, or soon after, he was appointed by Gen. Grant, Recorder of that District, and later on was made Minister to Haiti. His public duties in connection with these positions kept him most of the time at Washington, or away from Rochester. Had he remained at home he undoubtedly could have been elected to the House of Representatives or any office within the gift of the people of Monroe County.

Another incident in the life of Mr. Douglass at Rochester occurred when the John Brown raid was made in Virginia. Douglass was openly accused of complicity with Brown in that matter. He was compelled to leave the country to save being kidnapped and lynched. He went to Canada, and from there across the Atlantic. While in Glasgow he attended a meeting which was addressed by the great British abolitionist, agitator, and orator, George Thompson. Thompson had advertised that he would make an argument against the American Constitution, and Douglass went to hear him. The Mayor of Glasgow presided, and the large hall was crowded. Mr. Thompson attacked the American Constitution with great vigor, but Douglass saw that he had given a wrong construction to the document. Thompson charged that it was a pro-slavery instrument, and was designed to perpetuate the institution of slavery. Mr. Douglass immediately announced that a week later he would reply to the argument of Mr. Thompson in the same place, and show that our Constitution is an anti-slavery instrument.

He did reply. The Mayor of Glasgow presided at that meeting, and the hall had the same crowded audience that had listened to Mr. Thompson. Mr. Douglass analyzed the Constitution of the United States, and held up the ignorance of Thompson to ridicule, and so powerful was his speech that at the conclusion the audience voted unanimously that he had won the case.

But it was his close connection with John Brown's raid that more than any one other thing endeared Douglass to the people of the North. Brown was the guest of Frederick Douglass, in Rochester, for several weeks early in 1858. He then had an eye upon Harper's Ferry as a place where he could get weapons, but fortifications in the hidden recesses of the Alleghenies were uppermost in his mind.

Frederick Douglass was then living in the southern suburbs of the city, in an isolated, neighborless place on the woody hillside. The fields and groves surrounding his house were the favorite tramping-ground of John Brown when he was trying to think out the problems of his daring project, and he was so full of them that he could think and talk of nothing else, wearying his host not a little in discussing them, in season

and out of season. He had a set of blocks with which he would minutely illustrate his plans, and which, as Douglass used to tell the story, "interested my children more than they did me."

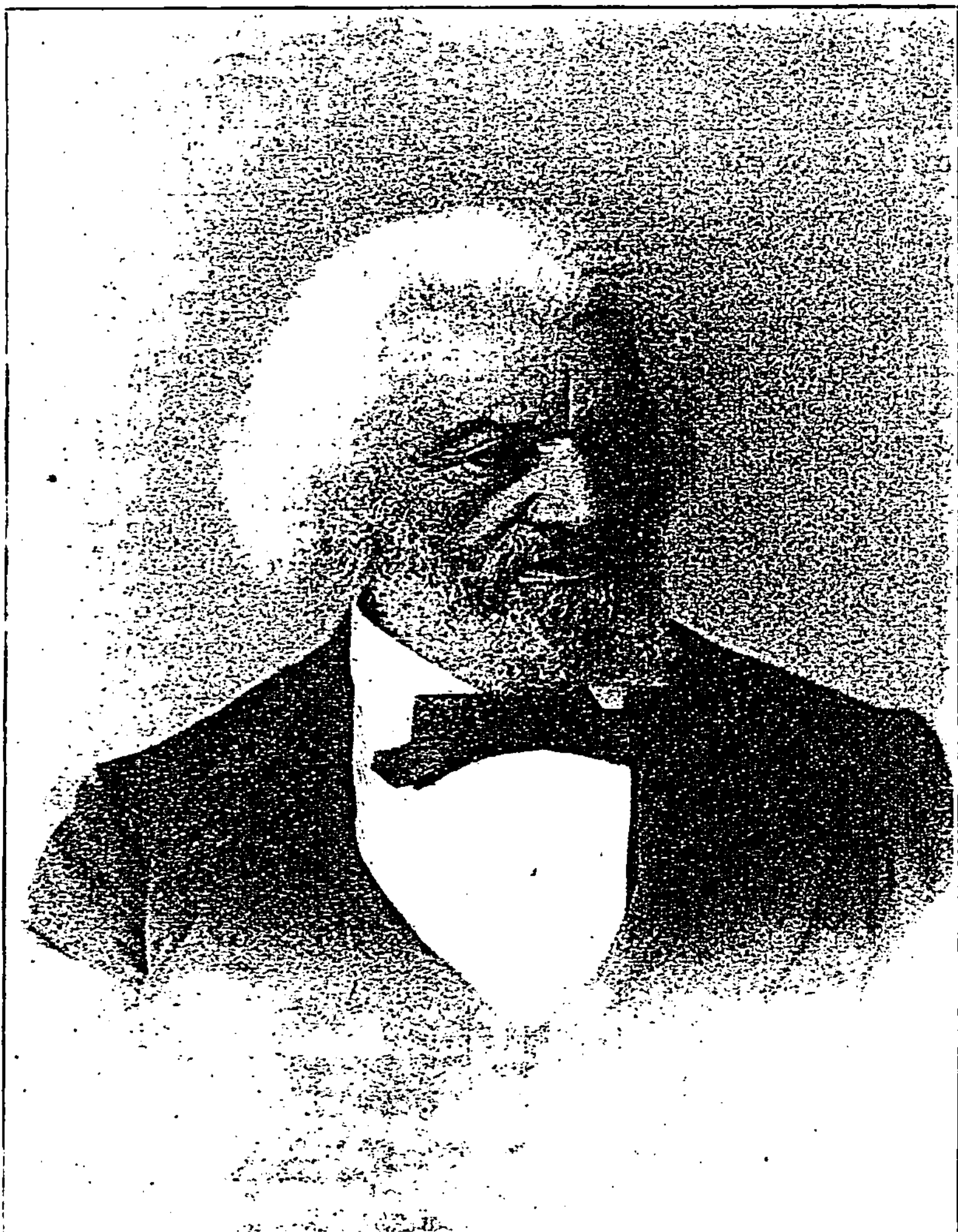
The attack upon Harper's Ferry was an after-thought, but the general plan of the raid was laid in detail when he was in Rochester. It was pronounced foolhardy and visionary by Douglass, who, however, stood by John Brown as far as he could in the risk of carrying it out; meeting him for a secret conference in an old stone quarry near Chambersburg, Penn., on the very eve of the attack. Brown wanted Douglass to go with him on his raid, but Douglass was wise enough to keep away, telling him he was going straight into a trap, and they parted forever, Douglass keeping out of sight as guardedly as he could.

Guests of the great ex-slave at Cedar Hill, the home of his closing years, in the suburbs of Washington, were sometimes shown the high writing desk which had been broken into the day after the raid by the officers who came in search of Douglass and of evidence against him. This was at Rochester. Six hours before their arrival he had left for Canada, but he had remembered in his flight what was in the desk—the Constitution of John Brown's refuge, drawn up by the old man himself, on three sheets of foolscap, in the plain, open, honest hand there could be no mistaking, together with the other incriminating papers, that would have condemned Douglass had they fallen into the hands of the officers.

Happily for Douglass there was a telegraph operator in Rochester just then who was quick to understand the enigmatical and unsigned message which he received in the midst of the excitement caused by the appearance of the United States Marshals, and the rumor that they were seeking for Douglass and proofs of his complicity with John Brown. This operator was directed to see that the old desk was broken open at once, and its papers abstracted and hidden. No time was lost by him in carrying out his orders. This historic desk is still preserved, with the original draft of John Brown's Constitution, by the Rochester Historical Society.

A story is told, though it cannot be vouched for, of Douglass's first visit to Haiti after his appointment as Minister to that republic by President Grant. The population of Haiti being negroes themselves at first were inclined to resent a negro Minister from our country, though it did not take them long to find out their mistake. However, when Douglass arrived he was met with much ado by the Haitian authorities with a band of music, &c. Douglass and his friends remarked upon the strange tune the band played while escorting him to his hotel, but they all took it for a Haitian "Hail to the Chief." Imagine their feelings to find out soon after that it was a native version of a "coon" song then quite popular in the United States. But Douglass was a warm friend of the Black Republic, and they soon took back all their resentment and held him in great esteem.

ALAN MERIMAN.



FREDERICK DOUGLASS.