

PART I

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH



I -- PROLOGUE

December 31, 1934

It was long past his usual nine o'clock bed-time when Prof. Carver said good-bye to his last visitor, stood for a moment watching the car disappear in the star-lit Alabama night, then turned and walked across the porch of Rockefeller Hall, on across the corridor, and opened the door into his own rooms. He had <sup>scarcely found a moment</sup> ~~not had a moment~~ alone all day, for he <sup>before he had</sup> ~~had~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~scarcely~~ finished his breakfast when the first visitor appeared, and there had been a steady stream of them to be received all day long.

Not that visitors were rareties with him, for no day passed without bringing its quota to Tuskegee to see Dr. Carver. <sup>Someone</sup> It was nothing uncommon for a big bus to arrive at Rockefeller Hall, bringing an eager, excited group of students from some school or college to see him. He was very patient with them, and very generous. Sometimes he showed them his collections of micas, his paintings, his books, the plants in the windows of his rooms. Sometimes he took them to his laboratory in the Agricultural Building--"God's Little Work-shop", ~~he called it--~~ and discussed with them the many and astounding products which, he had found, could be derived from peanuts, potatoes, clay, slag from coal mines, muck from the swamps--from almost any ordinary thing, for that matter. <sup>every day</sup>

He loved these Little Fellows, as he was wont to call them. It seemed that something within him rose up immediately and went out to meet them on their own light-hearted ground, for the eager gaiety of his own inherently <sup>youngful</sup> heart found swift companionship in such congenial company. And here and there, in every such group, there were two or three--or one, perhaps--to whom he felt instantly drawn by a more than casual bond. That dear little fellow, he would find himself thinking <sup>There boys & young men who get their</sup> ~~Though the~~ "little fellow might actually be six feet two, <sup>tall</sup> ~~or three~~ <sup>Now he</sup> That dear little fellow is different from the rest. He has a creative mind. I would like to tell him some interesting things about himself; he can make something more than the <sup>usual</sup> ordinary out of life.



Not all of his visitors came in bus loads, nor all from schools and colleges. <sup>but</sup> They ~~came~~ from all over the country, and <sup>even</sup> from the remote corners of the earth, <sup>yet</sup> now and then. It was his habit to give the same careful attention to one as to many, at times spending hours with one of his "boys" who had come for a visit, or with some young lad who had brought some <sup>rare</sup> gewgaw invention of his own to discuss with Dr. Carver. There were instances-- as his friends would tell you--when his usual patience and cordiality were suddenly replaced by an impenetrable aloofness. Now and then some curious caller would walk into an atmosphere of icy coolness as uncomfortable as it was inexplicable. The rank and calling of ~~such~~ hapless visitors apparently had nothing to do with it. There was the legendary story of a notable bishop who came to the Professor's office one day and was received so coldly that he made a most precipitate departure, his clerical coat-tails flying. And this was not the only oft-told tale of how somebody or other quickly found himself persona non ~~gratia~~ to Prof. Carver. Questioned by anxious friends as to the reason or wisdom in such display of inhospitality, he would simply remark that he didn't like the look in the <sup>man's</sup> fellow's eyes-- and it would have to go at that.

And then there were the letters that came every day-- letters and letters and letters. From India, <sup>requesting</sup> asking suggestions for a suitable menu for Mahatma Ghandi. From California, or any other state, <sup>inquiring</sup> asking if he were available for a series of lectures. From an old friend who had known him when he was in college at Ames. From ~~an~~ Art Society asking if he would <sup>lend</sup> loan a group of his paintings for the coming Exhibit. From a mission station in Africa <sup>requesting information</sup> concerning a powdered milk Dr. Carver had made from peanuts which ~~was being used with good results for babies of mission-~~ ~~aries.~~ From a school board in Kansas, notifying him that the new school building was being named for him and inviting him to speak at the dedication. From a Boy Scout executive, <sup>inquiring</sup> inquiring when the Botany manual he was writing for Boy Scouts would be ready. From a Committee of Awards: "We take pleasure in announcing that you have been selected as the



recipient of the Spingarm medal <sup>for</sup> this year". From a farmer: "I am sending <sup>the diseased plant</sup> a branch of the shrub concerning which we talked; I hope that you can find out for us what <sup>the trouble</sup> this disease is and what to do about it." .... So many, many letters! He usually wrote the answers to each one himself, in the early morning long before anyone else was awake. Of late he had noticed that his hand had grown unsteady with the writing, but so far he had steadily refused the often proffered stenographic aid.

Now that he was up in the seventies--just how far up, he himself did not exactly know, but somewhere up in the seventies-- Tuskegee authorities left him practically free from all routine duties to give his time to <sup>them</sup> visitors, <sup>and</sup> letters, or to anything that he chose. Not because he was seventy, but because there were so many things demanding his time and attention: Visitors; letters; lectures; experiments and explorations requiring long hours in his laboratory; trips into fields and woods to gather materials for his experiments; writing--for there was the Botany text-book still to be finished as well as numerous bulletins he was supposed to write. And a constant daily stream of requests and inquiries for <sup>any</sup> one <sup>ever</sup> would ever know what save George Washington Carver.

Giving up his regular class-room work, even the Sunday evening Bible class, had not withdrawn him from the main stream <sup>the ongoing life</sup> of Tuskegee Institute's ongoing life. Indeed in some ways he seemed more an essential part of it than ever. On mornings when there was particular need for him to be at his office or laboratory early, he had found it necessary to take a <sup>back</sup> path across the campus from Rockefeller Hall to the Agricultural Building, rather than the main avenue. Otherwise, with first one and then another stopping him, there was no telling how long he would be delayed. Some would stop him merely to see what kind of flower he was wearing today -there was always a flower or <sup>a</sup> sprig of green in his coat lapel. Some would joke him about his cap, usually carried in a wad in his left hand. Some of the women of the faculty, in particular, were



concerned about that cap. A disreputable looking thing, they called it, and sometimes they said such definite things to him about it that he would appear<sup>Rambly</sup> for several days thereafter carrying--if ~~it~~<sup>it</sup> were summer--his stiff straw sailor dyed a deep purplish black with ~~crepe myrtle dye~~<sup>of his own concoction</sup>. But the cap would soon reappear.

And now ~~it~~<sup>Seemed</sup> appeared that there would be something added to all these other things that had ~~so~~<sup>already</sup> filled his time. ~~Something toward which they all,~~ perhaps, had tended to bring him from the first; something else to be worked out, now that he was up in the seventies and somewhat equipped for such working. He closed the door behind him and stood still for a long moment, apparently looking at the rows of books lining the walls of the room, but actually seeing them not at all. The day(s visitors passed in swift procession again before him. Quickly brushing aside the merely curious-- "We just wanted to see what you look like"-- he gathered the remaining ones with infinite tenderness into his memory. What sorrow and suffering and clutching at a straw of hope he had seen in their tired, searching eyes? He would do what he could, promising little. The issue of it all, as he had long since discovered, was not his responsibility. Some One else would see to that.

Turning to the table, ~~he~~<sup>found</sup> picked up the paper he had had no time to read. There was the Associated Press story, just as they had said--the story that had started the procession of special visitors that day-- a procession destined, perhaps, to go on and on far out beyond the ~~farthest~~ borders of anyone's imagining.

~~Dr. Carver~~<sup>Dr. Carver</sup> might have seen another Looking back across the years-- ~~the seventy-odd years that had brought~~<sup>hours and days</sup> long procession, a long line of events, incidents, circumstances that had brought him, during these seventy-odd years, from a slave cabin ~~in~~<sup>on a</sup> Missouri farm to his present place <sup>among the</sup> as a great scientist, artist, and seer, prophets and exemplar, extraordinary of a new World order. It is the story of these events and circumstances -- the story of the life of George Washington Carver-- that ~~this~~<sup>these pages</sup> sets out to tell.



## II

### DIAMOND GROVE

On a morning in early autumn, ~~about~~ a decade after the close of the Civil War, a strange little figure in jeans and homespun came trudging down a hilly country road near Diamond Grove, Missouri. The bundle he carried slung over his shoulder gave a certain air of purpose to the trudging, <sup>but</sup> other than that, there was nothing in the outward appearance of the incident to indicate the far-reaching culmination and significance it was ultimately to attain. Anyone in the neighborhood, watching from a window, might have dismissed the little figure with a casual, "There goes Little George Carver. They say he is going away to school, and he is not much more than ten years old; small for his age, too."

It was true. Little George Carver was leaving home and going away to go to school. Not very far away, as miles are usually measured, for he meant to go no farther than Neosho, <sup>a small</sup> ~~the county seat~~ town, eight miles distant from Diamond Grove. But for him it was a long journey, especially long on that particular day when he was leaving home for the first time alone and--he felt certain--to stay.

He had <sup>known</sup> had a pleasant home these ten years, there on the farm with Mr. and Mrs. Moses Carver, the <sup>elderly couple</sup> people to whom his mother had belonged in the days before the War had come and given the slaves their freedom. Of his parents he had no recollection at all. His father, who had been a slave on an adjoining farm, had died before George was born, trampled to death by a team of oxen. And his mother, Mary Carver, had been stolen by a band of scalawag raiders during the closing days of the War. George himself had been stolen with her. He had heard many times the story of that dreadful happening.

Having heard that raiders were coming, the Carvers set about hiding any property that might be seized by the marauders. But there was only time to conceal the money and James, an older brother of George, before the



raiding party appeared. Mary Carver was seized and carried away, clutching her three-months-old baby close in her arms. And always, later, when the story was told, someone would point out the tree to which Moses Carver was tied and his feet burned in a futile effort to make him disclose the whereabouts of the hidden money and James.

*Mr. Carver sent out*  
A rider ~~was sent out~~ to search for, and if possible to re-purchase, the lost Mary and her child. Conflicting reports <sup>later</sup> surrounded the actual incidents of this rescuer's journey. <sup>but</sup> His own report--and the one commonly accepted as true--~~was~~ that Mary Carver had mysteriously disappeared, leaving no trace whatsoever of her whereabouts. Long afterward it was rumoured that this rider had actually found Mary Carver, bought her, and re-sold her with a margin of profit for himself, ~~and then had returned~~ with a false report to the Carvers. Another fragmentary <sup>rumour</sup> held that ~~someone~~ <sup>of soldiers</sup> had seen the lost Mary in the midst of a small group traveling northward. Whatever <sup>my</sup> actually have happened to her, it is certain that on ~~that~~ that terrible night Mary Carver disappeared forever from her home at Diamond Grove.

*almost* The baby was found with a family in Arkansas, ~~and~~ his survival <sup>being</sup> ~~is~~ as amazing as his mother's disappearance <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ mysterious. <sup>TV</sup> In his three short months of life he had been suddenly snatched away from home, and then had lost his mother, and <sup>small</sup> ~~now~~ was ill with a bad case of whooping cough. There was in reality only a ~~tiny~~ <sup>small</sup> spark of life left flickering in the tiny <sup>black</sup> body to sell back to Moses Carver, and the deal was soon completed. The Arkansas family let the baby go in exchange for a ~~run-down race~~ <sup>well at Diamond Grove</sup> horse brought along by the rider, a horse then valued at \$ 300. Under the care of Mrs. Carver the feeble spark <sup>a life</sup> ~~was~~ fanned into flame, and the baby came safely through the drastic disasters that attended his first three months. The two orphaned boys, George and his brother James, lived on then <sup>with</sup> ~~in~~ the Carvers, more as <sup>cared for</sup> children of the household than as sons of a former slave.



For some reason George -- or Little George, as everyone called him -- failed to grow and develop in a normal way physically. ~~Perhaps~~ <sup>may have</sup> The shock of his experience with the raiders had something to do with it, or it may have been the effects of the whooping cough. Whatever the reason, it seemed that nothing could induce him to grow. A droll, stunted, dwarfed-looking little creature, it appeared for a while that he was destined to be ~~an~~ <sup>almost</sup> ~~actual~~ hunchback. But, as time went on, by dint of persistently carrying across his back a strong straight stick, hooked in some fashion under his ~~arms~~ <sup>shows</sup>, he was able to smooth out the unsightly hump.

Unfortunately, no such simple remedy was found for the trouble in his throat. He spoke and ~~laughed~~ and sang in a shrill falsetto whisper, and was addicted to stammering under the stress of the slightest excitement or amusement. The stammer he was able to overcome, but it was years before his voice took on a quality even slightly resembling the normal.

The fragments of his recollections of these early years spent with the Carvers and his brother James present him as a ~~strangely~~ paradoxical child, ~~and~~ <sup>but</sup> one who was obviously the object of affectionate care and training and concern on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Carver. At times he appears as a gay little pixie--capering about the place in high glee; or stealing forbidden rides on the sheep when Mr. Carver ~~back~~ <sup>was not in sight</sup> was turned; or slipping out on a snowy night, when he was being kept indoors on account of his croup, to run <sup>with James</sup> off for a feast of luscious persimmons; ~~with~~ <sup>or</sup> singing in his queer falsetto voice the gay songs that bubbled up within him. Surrounded by the atmosphere of unquestioned security existent in the Carver home, he was blessedly free to laugh his <sup>silky</sup> pixie laughter, ~~and to~~ sing his gay songs, untroubled by any sense of oppression or insecurity.

Yet it is not in his pixie role that he most frequently appears during these childhood years. A minor strain of wistfulness and loneliness and pensive quietness sounds now and again <sup>in</sup> ~~thruout~~ the music of his early memories. Thought he had never known either his mother or his father, and



altho the Carvers made a home for him in a way that probably has few parallels in all American history, he yet somehow strangely missed his own parents, particularly his mother. There must have been a quality in his childish sadness resembling the nostalgia ~~yearning~~ expressed so poignantly in the old spiritual, "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, far, far from home". As soon as he was old enough to understand the story of his father's death and his mother's disappearance, he would ask again and again about his mother-- how she looked, what she said and did, and whether she would ever return. Vaguely he gathered that Mary Carver had been an extraordinary woman, in the opinion of all who knew her. He was certain that Mrs. Carver had sincerely loved her, for whenever she began to speak of <sup>the lost</sup> Mary, she invariably burst into tears. Two relics of his mother were given him by the Carvers, her bill of sale and her spinning wheel, relics which he has treasured through the years-- visible evidences of an inner devotion offered constantly at ~~the~~ <sup>a</sup> shrine created in his childish heart for a mother he never ~~would know~~ knew.

Down in the <sup>Barn</sup> feed lot one winter day a tragedy occurred that the boy was never to forget. He was amusing himself by throwing rocks and pebbles at the snow birds feeding on the grain strewn about on the ~~hard cold~~ ground, startled his shrill laughter rising high above the whirr of wings as the birds rose in ~~startled~~ flight. Eventually a pebble actually hit a bird, and this, too, at first, was a matter of great glee to Little George. He ran to find the wounded bird where it had fallen on the ground, but the sight of blood on its head sobered him instantly. Taking the little body gently up in his hands, he felt a feeble flutter in its breast, and then the bird was still. In that moment it seemed to him that all the ~~sin and~~ misery of all the world <sup>was</sup> somehow gathered together in him. With no excuse whatever, he had taken away life from something he loved, and he could never give it back again. There was no consolation for grief like this, and so for days he went about the place a miserable, forlorn little creature, weeping bitterly at the thought of the dead bird his own thoughtless hands had killed ..... ~~prophecy, perhaps,~~

In later years he often repeated the story of this childhood tragedy, invariably ending, "I never have forgotten that day!!"



of those days to come when--as a man-- he would know grief again for tragedy and suffering brought upon the defenseless by the thoughtless cruelty of the careless.

Being so little and frail, and thus unfit for much out-door work, George spent much time about the house with Mrs. Carver, a habit which eventually came to be of <sup>much</sup> immense value to him, for she taught him to cook and to sew; to scrub and clean; to keep a house and yard in spotless order. Too spotless, to the boy's way of thinking at that time, for it meant that he was not allowed to bring flowers or plants into the house; no bouquets must clutter up the place. And there was no room for his rocks. This was a matter for <sup>much</sup> grave concern, indeed, for as soon as he was old enough to go around by himself, he was forever going out to the nearby fields and woods and bringing back flowers or rocks or plants of some kind.

Long, quiet hours he spent in the woods and fields, watching the birds, or gazing for a long while at a leaf or a flower, or finding all manner of curious things and wondering about them. What made one rock white and another one brown? And why was this flower small and another <sup>full</sup> beside it large? And this leaf - how was it made in the beginning, and could he ever, when he was grown, make anything that would be like it? Question after question took form in his mind in those long quiet hours he spent alone, roaming the fields and woods, finding and gathering his plants and rocks to take home.

The day finally came when Mrs. Carver told him he would have to get rid of his rocks--They were all over the house to be stumbled over, and she simply could not have it so any longer. He was considerably troubled, and went out <sup>side</sup> to try to think what he could do. A few days before he had found a wonderful rainbow-colored rock, broken into two pieces so that the colors showed all through. He had brought both pieces home, and to give them both up seemed utterly impossible. Finally he took one piece in each ~~hand~~



hand, went far out in the yard, closed his eyes, and threw one piece as far as he could fling it, then ran in the opposite direction. <sup>with the other piece he simply could not</sup> Years afterward he <sup>put with all of this beloved beautiful rock.</sup> said that he was certain if he looked to see where the piece fell, he would be obliged to go and get it again, so much did he love his rainbow rock.

There was difficulty with Mrs. Carver over his frogs, as well. He had made a wonderful collection of frogs in graduated sizes, each one a little different in size from all the rest-- an enviable collection indeed. But trouble came when he took to carrying the collection around in his pockets, for Mrs. Carver, who probably shared little of his enthusiasm for frogs in the first place, certainly could not put up with having frogs of all sizes go hopping about the house at night. And so it was that the hard law was laid down: Little George would have to turn all his pockets out whenever he entered the house.

It was after these experiencies with his rocks and frogs that he made a little secret garden down in the edge of the woods, a place to which he could bring the plants he was constantly finding in his rambles here and there--finding and wanting to keep. Here he brought his beloved plants and cared for them with a wisdom based partly upon the knowledge to be expected of a Missouri country boy of his day, and partly upon a strange, intuitive understanding <sup>but poorly</sup> inadequately explained by any human logic or reasoning.

The Carvers taught him to read and to write, and gave him a copy of Webster's Blueback Speller-- a book whose pages he searched eagerly but vainly for answers to the questions that buzzed incessantly back and forth in his mind. James had been to school at Neosho, the county <sup>seat</sup> town eight miles away, riding horseback back and forth each day. But James was not able to tell his little brother the things he most wanted to know, particularly the things he wanted to know about rocks and plants and flowers; nor was he able to get much help in this matter from the Carvers. So it was that the thought, and then the conviction, grew in his mind that he, too, must go to school; that he must go somewhere to find the answers to his questions for himself.



Discussing the matter with <sup>the Carvers</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Carver, he found them willing, though reluctant, to have him go. He was much too small to ride the eight miles each day as James had done, and ~~he~~ sides, there was no other horse for him to ride. It would be necessary for him to find some place to stay in Neosho. The Carvers had no money for his schooling, but if he wished to go and make his own way, they would raise no objections. He might go and try it for a while, and then, if he wished to, he <sup>could</sup> ~~might~~ come back again.

He had been to Neosho before. Twice each year the horses were hitched to the wagon for the eight mile trip to town, the purpose of the journey being the purchase of a half year's supply of the household necessities it was impossible to make at home. It was always a great day. James went on one of the trips each year; George on the other. Mrs. Carver never went with them-- as long as she lived she never went out of the county in which she was born. So -- on these trips-- George had traveled to Neosho and had seen the school there. How he would live or what he would do he did not know, <sup>but</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>now</sup> would take care of itself when the time came. All that he knew for certain was that he was going.

Thus he set about making his plans, and finally the day for his going <sup>departure</sup> came. Mrs. Carver helped him tie up his clothes and his Blueback Speller and some food in a little bundle. He put in some of his precious plants, and his piece of rainbow rock. Then he was ready to go.

Taking up his bundle, he said good-by, and his diminutive figure was soon lost to the sight of the Carvers and James as they watched him go trudging down the road and disappear over the hill. Droll, stunted, Little George Carver-- the strangely gifted but strangely handicapped son of two slaves-- was leaving home to go to school and to make his own way in the world..... <sup>And Again</sup> That Great Something which in all ages, and among all classes and races of men, <sup>especially</sup> reaches out to claim and use its mysteriously chosen own, had laid its mystic, mighty hand upon George Washington Carver.



### III

#### NEOSHO

*on that early autumn day of Nov*

It was an exciting journey, the eight-mile walk to Neosho; <sup>new</sup> there were so many things to see and to think about. Familiar landmarks George had seen before on his trips with Moses Carver assumed a new aspect now as he walked along by himself; there was a new glamour and enchantment about them, For he was going to school. He would soon know, now, many of the things that had puzzled him for so long, the answers to the questions that had buzzed about in his mind. School, school, school.... the word sang itself over and over within him as he walked along, stopping now and then to examine a plant, or to listen to the call of a bird.

He would manage to get along somehow; of this he was quite confident. He knew how to do so many kinds of work--he could cook, clean house, milk cows, ~~and do laundry work~~ <sup>laundry, clothes and cut fire wood</sup>. The people in Neosho must have someone to do such <sup>things</sup> ~~work~~ for them, and they would pay him for his work. Then he could take the money and buy food to eat, and books to read; someday he meant to have a hundred books, <sup>perhaps</sup> ~~maybe~~ even more than that. And he would find some place to live; he would work and pay for it -- someone would let him have a home in Neosho. If he should be sick so that he could not work, he could go back to the Carvers again; he <sup>could</sup> ~~was~~ always sure of that-- <sup>he has seen that</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>get me</sup> a warm, encouraging certainty.

So he went on his way to Neosho, confident, happy, excited--the eagerness in his heart giving wings to his feet so that he felt <sup>little</sup> ~~no~~ tiredness from the walking. Neosho was not a large town, but to George it seemed large indeed, accustomed as he was to the comparative isolation of life at Diamond Grove. Yet he was not afraid. He had been to some of the stores with Mr. Carver, and knew his way around the town a little. Why should he be afraid? The first matter of importance was to find a place to spend this first night. It was too late to look for work today; that must be left until tomorrow. But what should he do tonight?



It turned out to be very simple. He found an old barn that looked as if <sup>mind</sup> no one used it anymore. He could sleep there. Certainly no one would ~~care~~, and it would be <sup>✓</sup> good shelter in case a rain should fall. He had spent too many happy hours in the woods alone to be afraid to stay by himself, even in so strange a place. And whatever tugs of homesickness he might have felt were soon overcome by the natural exhaustion of the eight-mile walk and all the excitement of the day, so that it was not long before he lay fast asleep in the old abandoned barn, his head pillowed on the precious little bundle that held all his earthly possessions.

For several days he ~~was~~ busy looking for work, coming back to the barn to sleep at night. Some of the store-keepers recognised him as the queer-looking little boy they had seen with old Mr. Carver on his rare visits to town, but George had <sup>nothing to</sup> no notion of asking for help from anyone. What he wanted was work to do by which he might earn his own living. From house to house he went, an eager, confident, though ~~at times~~ <sup>inquiring</sup> tired little boy, asking if there were any odd jobs he might do. And finally he did find those <sup>people</sup> who had such jobs and were willing for him to try them. He looked far too small to be able to do the things he said he could do, but when given the chance, he made good his promises in a remarkably efficient manner. Actually, these little house-and-yard jobs were quite easy for him; he had been doing such things <sup>almost</sup> ever since he could remember. It was harder having to look for them ~~as he did now~~, but <sup>now</sup> people ~~were~~ <sup>will</sup> paying him for them, in money or old clothes, or food. If he could find some place to stay... that was the main problem. The old barn would serve for a little <sup>while</sup> time, but winter would come and he could not live in a barn. And then it was too lonely to be always by himself at night, with no one to whom he might talk... He wanted <sup>a home</sup> ~~some folks~~ and a family.

Then one day he found them. In his rounds of job-hunting he came to a neat, three-roomed frame cottage on the edge of town where a ~~Wax~~ Mr. Watkins and his wife lived, people of his own race. Mrs. Watkins was a nurse, and often



away from home nursing sick people for days at the time. They found that George could cook, and keep a house clean, and work a garden-- at least he said <sup>that</sup> he could. They had no children of their own, so if this boy could do the things he said he could do, he would be just what they needed, a handy boy to have around for company as well as for work. They felt very drawn to the strange little fellow, and the matter was soon settled. He would come and live with them, working about the house for his board and keep, and when school was in session, he could go to school.

As the weeks went by it was more and more evident that the arrangement was wisely made. George did the cooking, milked the cow, and looked after the garden with the meticulous care demanded by his own strongly-developed sense of beauty and order as well as by the habits instilled in him back in the Carver household. He found both Mr. and Mrs. Watkins sympathetic with him in his eagerness to learn, and willing to give him all the help they could. They could both read and write fairly well, but their help came chiefly thru their understanding and encouragement and care.

Mrs. Watkins was touched, as Mrs. Carver had been, by his physical frailty, and did all in her power to make him more vigorous and healthy. They were delighted with his little garden, for he had started a new garden just as soon as possible after he knew where he was to live. It was not long before he was spending all the time he could in the woods and fields again, among the flowers and rocks and wild things he so loved. News drifted about that the little boy living with the Watkins family knew a lot about plants and could make them grow, and before long the neighbors were bringing him their sickly plants. He seemed to know how to find the trouble, and to start them growing again.

He could scarcely wait for the time for school to open, but the day did finally come. A disinterested onlooker might have found little of beauty in the one-room long house to which George went so eagerly. But to him, during the first days at school, there was a mystic enchantment about it. Here he was to learn, learn, learn. What did it matter that the miracle was to take



place in an ugly, uncomfortable long hut! He sat, with the fifteen or twenty other pupils, on backless wooden benches, holding his slate on his knees. And with the other fifteen or twenty, paid more or less heed to the wisdom unfolded by the man who was their teacher. They were studying not only Reading and Writing and Arithmetic, but Geography, Spelling, and Grammar. Many intriguing vistas opened up before George as the days went along, for his creative mind was able to make of the stray crumbs of knowledge he received each day nourishing bread for his imagination and dreams. <sup>And yet, while</sup> Still, though grateful for the crumbs, he <sup>grew</sup> was more and more hungry for the real bread. It was a hunger that deepened and grew as time went on and he found so many of his ceaseless questions still unanswered, either by his books or by his teacher.

There were times when he was very lonely. It was fun to romp and play with the other boys at recess times at school; but none of them, he discovered, liked to go with him to roam the fields and woods, in search of plants for his garden. So, again, he went to the woods alone. The birds and little woods animals came to seem as much at home with him as he was with them. Sometimes he almost felt that he could talk with the birds, for he had practised until he could whistle their notes almost as well as they themselves could.... If he could only understand what they said.

Now and then, when Mrs. Watkins could spare him, he went back home for a week-end visit. One Saturday afternoon as he walked along the road on his way to Diamond Grove, a man overtook him and offered him a ride. He was scarcely settled in the rickety buggy when the man began to beat his bony, weak old horse constantly and cruelly. Each blow seemed to fall with sickening pain upon the sensitive boy's own body, and finally he could stand it no longer. Explaining to the man that he was almost home, he got out of the buggy, climbed a little cliff beside the road, and walked the rest of the way through the woods. Perhaps, he thought, among the things of the woods he could forget that poor, poor horse.



At times there were opportunities for him to work at various jobs for people in the town--sawing wood, beating carpets, going on errands here and there. It was a good means of earning a little <sup>extra</sup> money, and often he would be given his pay in clothing, or in books. There was a strange thing, he noticed, about many of these people for whom he worked--about a good many of the people he saw everywhere, for that matter. He sensed it when he went into the stores, or around on the streets, or almost anywhere he might go. They seemed to feel that he was entirely different from them; that it did not matter to him at all what things they said to him, or how they said them. It was very strange. He had never felt anything like it at the Carvers; perhaps that was why it troubled him so. Gradually it began to dawn upon him that it was somehow connected up with the fact that his skin was dark, rather than light. He must never forget this. Just what the difference was he was unable to understand; perhaps when he was older, he could. He must try, now, to make no outward sign when happenings like this sent a tugging pain up <sup>throat</sup> into his ~~throat~~ and another great question into his mind. There were other things ~~happening~~ each day that were not like this, things that brought him happiness, rather than ~~pain~~ pain. He made up his mind to try to think most of the joyous <sup>occurrences</sup> things, forgetting, when he could, the hurting ones-- a childish decision he was to adhere to all the days of his life.

On a day in late spring a covered wagon stopped at the Watkins home and a man and his wife came in to ask for lodging for the night. They were on their way back to their home in Fort Scott, Kansas, and wished to stop for a rest. It turned out that they stayed on for several days, finding the hospitality of the Watkins household very much to their liking. They were interested in the little boy, George, too, and were not long in discovering his eager thirst for knowledge. Presently they suggested that he go to Fort Scott with them. They could not give him a home, or help him with money, but they would be glad to give him the trip with them, and he would find a good school in Fort Scott.



In his contacts with some of the people for whom  
he worked he sometimes sensed what to him  
seemed a very strange attitude; he had never  
known anything like it in the Carver  
home, and at first was greatly puzzled. Some  
of these people seemed to think he was very  
different from them - they spoke to him in  
tones they never used when talking among  
themselves - tones that brought a big lump ~~to~~  
<sup>into</sup> his throat and a baffling question to his  
mind. Gradually it began to dawn upon him  
that this attitude and manner were somehow  
connected with the fact that his skin was  
dark - a fact that seemed in some peculiar  
way to make a great difference to these  
people. His color had never seemed to make any  
difference to the Carvers, but ~~thereafter~~ <sup>after</sup> he  
~~understood it~~ with these other people now  
it seemed that it did. More and more conscious of  
the fact that this was something he probably would  
always have to ~~contend with~~ <sup>face</sup> he made up his  
mind that he would try each day to forget  
these incidents that hurt him, remembering only  
those that made him feel happy - ~~It was~~ a child's  
decision, but one he was faithfully to adhere  
to insofar as it was humanly possible all the  
course of his life.



What should he do ? It was a big decision for so small a boy to make, but from the first George was almost certain he would go. Fort Scott was a much larger town than Neosho, and he would have no friends or acquaintances there;<sup>he knew</sup> no one to whom he might go if something terrible should happen to him. He might not find any work to do; he might even go hungry until he starved. But he had no intention of letting that happen; he had made his own way in Neosho, and he could do it again in Fort Scott.

~~XXXX~~The school there, he imagined, would be wonderful, and there would be new people to tell him things, many new places to see. For some time before the school session was over in Neosho he had felt that there would be little use in his going back there again; he felt rather certain that this teacher had already told him about all he would be able to tell. There was something else to consider, too. The doctor had told Mrs. Watkins that George might be more strong and healthy in some other climate. He had continued to be very frail, and still had not begun to grow at all; she had been very anxious about the child at times. Perhaps the climate in Fort Scott would be exactly what he needed.

All in all, it seemed best for him to go. George himself was sure of it. In a vague sort of way it seemed to him that it must have all been planned out somehow that he was to have this chance to go on. Just where he was to go, he was not sure-- but somewhere farther on.

So the decision was made. His little bundle, larger this time, was packed and tied again. And again he said good-bye to the comfortable security of home and, obedient to an urgent, inner Command, he set off with two strangers in a covered wagon, westward into the Unknown.



#### IV

#### Fort Scott and Minneapolis

Fort Scott lay to the west and north of Neosho a distance of little more than 75 miles, a mere commuter's journey today. But to the man and woman and eager little boy making their slow way in the covered wagon, setting up camp in the open at night, sixty-odd years ago, it was a trip of memorable magnitude consuming the greater part of two weeks. The way led thru rolling country, ~~plains~~, woodlands, <sup>isolated</sup> unsettled areas, a few small ~~towns~~, <sup>settlements</sup> and fertile farming sections. Little George was entranced with it all, drinking in the sights and sounds of the strange new country with all the excitement of a little boy going on his first long journey coupled with the deeper excitement of finding new food for his hungry <sup>young</sup> mind, fresh fuel for the fires of his dreams. Writing of the trip long afterward, he said, "My chief recollections of this journey are of the beautiful wild flowers, the marvelous rocks, and the beautiful birds we saw."

Arrived at Fort Scott, the county seat of ~~Boonville~~ <sup>Bowling</sup> county and a town of some importance as a railroad center, ~~with a population at that time of -----~~, George began again his search for work and a place to live. Years later, trying to piece together his fragmentary recollections of the seven years he spent at Fort Scott, he remarked, quietly, "I don't remember many actual incidents of those days. ~~And~~ <sup>And</sup> a little colored boy, living about in first one place and then another, expecting to be kicked around and being somewhat surprised when he isn't, doesn't set down data for future reference." <sup>you see</sup>

By and large his Fort Scott life followed the pattern he had set for himself during the year at Neosho. He lived for a part of this period with a Negro family by the name of Payne, doing work about the house and yard to earn his board and keep, with additional work ~~at odd jobs~~ for other families in town as a means of earning the extras of livelihood.



The school was good here-- a well-organised graded school housed in a five-room frame building, with instruction that was much more satisfying and stimulating than that experienced in the log school house at Neosho. Here again he was studying Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic, Grammar, and Geography-- enjoying them all except Arithmetic, a subject upon which he expended little affection, and probably as little work, at Fort Scott or anywhere else. He was beginning ~~to try to draw~~ <sup>which</sup> now, however, and to give to his drawing the time and attention some of his teachers might have considered better spent upon his Arithmetic. He liked to sing, in his queer high falsetto, but in these years he had yet to see his first piano or organ.

Many hours during all these years, as at Diamond Grove and Neosho, he spent out ~~in the open and fields and woods alone~~ <sup>in the out-of-doors</sup>, engrossed in discovering and pondering the mysteries of ~~rocks and plants, birds and flowers~~ <sup>over presents about him there</sup>. "I literally almost lived in the fields and woods," he wrote of these years later. And the countryside about Fort Scott, ~~rich in mineral and ---- deposits~~, provided a wealth of material for his curious mind to investigate. The Payne family, like Mr. and Mrs. Watkins in Neosho, were interested in the gardens he was always planting and tending out in the yard, <sup>or</sup> underneath his window, <sup>around</sup> even in boxes and various containers he kept in ~~the~~ the house. His plants were almost like people to him, close and intimate acquaintances.

But he had many human fridns as well, of his own and of the white race, among those of his own age and among his elders also. Like any normal child, he enjoyed the daily play and pranks and laughter of ~~his small friends~~ <sup>of his own age</sup>, but liked also to spend some time with older people, proud when he could do some little extra errand for them, interested in their comments and conversations. <sup>Some of these friends he found at the churches</sup> ~~which he went on~~ <sup>Sundays</sup>. "I loved to go to church and often went," he has said. "But the denomination made no difference to me"-- thus summing up, with characteristic simplicity, not only the dawning, during those adolescent years, of his <sup>a statement which was true not only in these childhood days, but of all his life</sup> ~~all his~~ <sup>all his</sup> ~~life~~ <sup>evening</sup> days.



lasting sense of an Invisible Presence at work with men in the world, but also a basic statement <sup>attitudes</sup> concerning his religious ~~beliefs~~ and practises all his life long.

The climate at Fort Scott, slightly colder than that at Neosho, seemed to agree with the boy and he grew much stronger and ~~less frail~~ <sup>small</sup> physically in the seven years there. But he still was a ~~little~~ dwarf-like creature, showing little appreciable growth of body as the development of his inner ~~invisible~~ perceptions and appreciations went on at rapid pace. It would seem that a physical difference of this type might have set him apart from companions of his own age, making him sensitive concerning his size, shutting him off from the interests and occupations of normal adolescence. But his recollections deny the existence of any such actuality. "My school-mates never seemed to notice any difference," he observes. "I had many friends <sup>now</sup> old and young who encouraged me to go on. I cannot remember the name of any particular person who was of greatest help to me, but there were those, both white and colored, who took ~~and~~ interest in me and did much to make me feel like other children with homes"..... "I had no particular sense of calling or mission in those days. I just hungered to know about everything, real or artificial: How did it get that way? Why can't I make it? I must learn how."

One horrible recollection out of the Fort Scott years was destined to lie, like a quick, livid scar, across his memory ever afterward-- <sup>the memory of</sup> ~~the first~~ <sup>only</sup> ~~and last~~ lynching he ~~ever~~ saw. The house in which he lived at the time was near the jail, near enough that he saw the crowd come, batter down the jail door, and drag away the <sup>N</sup> negro prisoner, his head scraping along the rough street until the skull was broken--drag him away to the place where he <sup>was</sup> ~~would be~~ lynched. Here was a happening too terrible to be held within the ~~frail~~ <sup>the</sup> bonds of <sup>he had</sup> his childish decision made back in Neosho-- the decision to forget, as far as possible, the things that hurt him, remembering only the experiences of joy. Years later, when, as a ~~great~~ man of Science, Art, and Religion, he was sought as lecturer in ~~schools~~ <sup>schools</sup>



*many cities*  
schools and colleges, cities and towns, and an incident arose ~~xxxx~~ around the fact of his race, this early horror returned to haunt him with a swift and nameless terror, brief-lived but vested with strange power to ~~call up~~ *for a moment* in the mature man the agony of fear born years before in the heart of the sensitive boy.

After seven years at Fort Scott, George finally yielded to his growing desire to see the Carvers and Diamond Grove and his brother James again. He went home for a summer vacation. And so small was he in stature even yet, the now about 18 years of age, that he bought a half-fare ticket for the trip, only to learn that even that was unnecessary. For the conductor on the train, when the ticket was proffered, said in astonishment, "Why Child, you didn't need to buy a ticket. You are small enough to ride for nothing". ~~A dwarf's body indeed, but no dwarfed mind dwelt within it.~~

It was a happy summer at Diamond Grove. George had kept in touch with the Carvers and James by occasional correspondence, but there was a great joy and satisfaction in actually being back with them again, hearing and exchanging experiences, visiting again the places he had loved; going occasionally to see the Watkins family at Neosho.

At the end of the summer, for some ~~xxxxxx~~ *now* cause ~~vanished~~ *among* long since ~~xxx~~ the shadows of ~~unremembered reasons~~ *forgot*, he did not return to Fort Scott as he had intended, but went on farther north and west to Minneapolis, ~~the~~ *a small town in* county seat of ~~-----~~ *Illinois* county in north central Kansas. Here he spent the next two years, earning his own living as before, and completing his High School work. Two major happenings stand out in sharply-etched relief against the background of these Minneapolis years. First, a major loss: A letter from the Carvers came one day bringing the sorrowful news of the death of his brother James. ~~The cause of the death had been small pox. It would not be possible to find words adequate to portray the sense of alone-ness and loss in the heart of George when he realised his brother was gone. No living relative, no person of blood kin, so far as he knew, was left him in the world.~~ *from this attack* *now*

*George Carver*



Two daughters had been born to Mary Carver and her husband, <sup>the</sup> as well as two sons, but these girls had died in infancy, leaving only the two boys. And now George was alone, with no living kin, no family ties whatever. It was a tragedy which could only be fully understood by the rare few who ever actually experience it. To the sensitive heart of young George Carver this sorrow brought a <sup>seemingly alone - his</sup> constant yearning loneliness from which he was never to be <sup>behave ment</sup> free.

The other major Minneapolis experience was one of great joy, however, for finally, after all the years of being a little dwarf, George <sup>actually</sup> began to grow. And so rapidly did the long-delayed growth take place that, at the end of two years, he stood a little more than six feet tall, a little <sup>somewhat</sup> stooped, but--at long last-- in actual physical height, a man. Along with this amazing development in size, there came also a more normal voice, <sup>with</sup> somewhat high-pitched and of peculiar quality in speaking, but a clear treble-like quality high tenor for singing.

As he came near the end of his High School work, his desire to go on to college deepened, finally crystallizing into definite plan and purpose, and his choice of a college fell upon Highland University, a school owned by the Presbyterian church and located at the little town of Highland, in Doniphan county <sup>UP</sup> in the northeastern corner of Kansas. An intimation of the trend of his thinking at this time appears in the reason he later gave for having chosen Highland University. <sup>here at Highland,</sup> In a school owned and operated by a church, <sup>located</sup> he said, set down in the midst of a small town whose life centered in its ~~college~~ college, its several stores, and its four churches, he expected to find the simple, <sup>kindly</sup> religious environment for which his heart had hungered.

His application for admission was sent in and accepted, and thruout the summer his plans made, struggle to keep pace with his dreams as he looked <sup>on</sup> ahead into the days to come when he should actually be in College. He expected to study Science, as a matter of course--particularly those Sciences <sup>which</sup> that dealt with soils and plants. <sup>But</sup> Along with his Sciences he would study



Painting and Music. The prospect was almost breath-taking in its entrancing possibilities, and constantly filled his mind with keen anticipations as he went about his work during the summer days, endeavoring to make the money essential for the trip and for the first few weeks' requirements. His means of support thereafter was a matter he would work out after he had reached Highland, at that time a village of about 600 souls, four miles from the nearest railroad. ~~So~~ the summer drew to ~~a~~ close and the day finally dawned when George Carver found himself actually arrived in Highland, his heart and mind flooded with high hopes, and confident, courageous dreams.



V  
Highland, Beeler, and Winterset

At the time appointed for registration, George, along with the 150 other young men and women who made up the student body of Highland ~~University~~ at that time, presented himself on the campus to complete the matriculation requirements-- a tall, extremely slender, eager youth keenly aware of the high significance of the day. Then fell the incredible blow: He was ~~refused~~ admission to Highland ~~University~~. His written application had been tentatively accepted, ~~to be sure~~ <sup>it was true</sup>, but that was before his racial heritage was known. ~~That~~ <sup>tentative</sup> acceptance was cancelled now, ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> was a Negro. He would not be admitted as a student to Highland University.

There is ~~no~~ <sup>long-cherished</sup> record of the days ~~that~~ <sup>concerning them</sup> immediately followed this sudden staggering crash of his plans. An intimation of what they were like appears, ~~however~~, in the fact that half a century later (altho his memory was clear concerning incidents occurring both earlier and later than this Highland experience)--it took him some time to dig up from its deep burial place in his mind even the name of the college that once had refused to admit him. Long years later he made to a student group a suggestion which he <sup>himself</sup> must have followed in those empty hours in Highland, Kansas, immediately after a great stone, which he seemingly had no power to remove, had been rolled across the pathway of his hopes and plans and dreams.

"Proceed", he said to this student group, "from the Known to the nearest related Unknown". The Known for him in those bleak days was the fact that his long-cherished dream of going to college lay in fragments now about him, leaving him face to face with the stark immediate question: What shall I do now? The nearest related Unknown obviously was the two-fold problem of earning his living and finding some way, outside college walls, to realise the urgent, invincible dream the years had deeprooted within him.

The habit of independence hard-won during the years at Neosho, Fort Scott, and Minneapolis stood him in good stead now. With no funds suffi-



cient to take him elsewhere, he was obliged to stay on in Highland, in daily proximity to constant reminders of the bitter frustration of his plans. Turning to fine laundry and hous-and-yard work as a means of livelihood, he set out to study alone, for implanted deep within the <sup>sensitive</sup> spirit of this tall, quiet-seeming youth, there was something that was not to be defeated nor denied, even in the face of such shock and disappointment as had now befallen him. The story of what had happened to him ~~on the campus~~ soon spread about the little town, and there were those, particulay a few church women, who saw to it that he had the work by which he could at least earn a living. For a part of the time during his stay in Highland, he lived alone in town. Later he was employed at the John Beeler homestead, about a mile southeast of town, for various types of work about the house and farm. With Frank Beeler, a son of the family, George became fast friends. Writing later, in the "Highland Vidette", Frank Beeler gives this picture of George during the Kansas days:

"He applied for admission to the University but for some cause ~~other~~, never very clear to me, he was never accepted. Not discouraged, he went diligently to work with his college studies, and advanced marvelously, meanwhile doing fine laundry work, knitting, tatting, embroidery, painting, ~~vaca~~ and instrumental music. ~~xxxxxx~~ Exceptionally bright, quiet, ~~modest~~, he was a general favorite at many social functions. Mrs. Wilson Baird, Mrs. Dr. Hammond, my mother, and other ladies took an interest in the boy .... He next went to Ness county, Kansas, and filed on a homestead ~~two~~ miles south of the little town of Beeler (about 525 miles southwest of Highland) built a sod house on his claim, and put in crops. He also got a job with the Gregg-Steeley Livestock ranch nearby doing house work and cooking, carrying on in the meantime his music, painting, and studies. Mr. Steeley was a fine violinist, Mr. Gregg a good guitarist, ~~xxxxxx~~ George organist, and myself B flat cornet. I look back with a great deal of satisfaction to the concerts we pulled off in the sod houses and also in my store after business hours. Those were the



days of real joy".

A little further look at the school boy pranks sometimes played by these young men on each other, as well as on their sod house neighbors, is provided by Frank Beeler in his story of George and the roasting corn episode. About half-way between George's house and the little village of Beeler,--so the story goes-- lived a settler ~~known~~ known as "Cyd one Munn". ~~And~~ Flowing quite near the Munn house there was a small creek, making possible a garden, and in this garden, at one time, there were rows of green corn, a rare sight on those dry Kansas acres in those days of the eighties. George and Frank carefully kept watch on the growing corn, gaily laying their plans for that day when the ears should be ripe for roasting. When the time finally came, according to plan, George waited for a cloudy night, then made his way to the Munn garden, transferred the juicy corn ears from the stalks to the gunny sack <sup>he had</sup> brought along for the purpose, and was on his way to the store when suddenly there were shots, and bullets came singing by him. Frightened almost out of his senses, he broke into a run and stopped only when he fell exhausted in the door of the Beeler store. But he still had the gunny sack of corn, and when he had recovered sufficient breath, he began the business of cooking the tender ears of corn in an old <sup>tin</sup> can over a fire built in a shallow hole in the ground. Inside the store, Frank Beeler managed to eat the roasted ears almost as fast as George brought them in, and finally poor George found himself with only three ears of the delectable corn to pay for all his pillaging ! <sup>2</sup>

The painting, music, and laundry work mentioned in the Beeler sketch in the "Highland Vidette" might have been expected in any comment concerning George Carver during those years, but "tatting, knitting, embroidery"--these seem strange words to connect with him. And yet not strange ~~at all~~, actually, for out of his early lessons with Mrs. Carver had come the ability not only to "sew a fine seam", but also to work out intricate designs in



tatting and crochet. The "fine seam" knowledge had been of practical value all during the years when he had looked out for himself, which naturally had meant not only caring for his body but seeing to his clothes as well.

And as for the tatting, knitting, and crocheting, thruout his life these <sup>were to</sup> have provided for him a pleasant recreation and hobby. Some inkling of what this hobby has meant to him is found in a letter he once wrote a young artist in regard to the need for frequent relaxation from artistic efforts: "Sometimes the very best thing to do is to work out a design in crochet or tatting, as they require very high concentration along that particular line". He has found his designs in many places--dew-wet, fresh-spun spider webs being a favorite source of inspiration. It is not so strange, after all, to find George Carver, in his early twenties, in a lonely ~~god~~ hut on the plains of Kansas, working out intricate and beautiful designs in tatting and croceht. As far~~as~~ back as he could remember he had looked upon things about him with two incessant questions in his mind: How was this thing made? And can I ever make anything like it? Now, as a young man, with his two-fold scientist~~-~~artist nature deepening and developing, these constant questions apparently were at work even in his recreation-- the scientist seeing, observing, comprehending the design in a new-spun cobweb; the artist recreating the design in tatting and crochet.

It is in this two-fold role of scientist-artist that we frequently find him out on the plains around his "Dry Claim" near Beeler, observing soil, the vegetation, the rocks. Few of the things of Nature about him escaped his minute attention. But he brought to <sup>his</sup> investigations and conclusions, even in these early years, something more than the keen observations and interpretations characteristic of the usual so-called "scientific mind". He brought also the artist's emotional out-pouring of tenderness and love for the beauty he found in them; the artist's desire to reproduce in something of his own creation this fragile, fleeting beauty. So we find him



useable  
 painting, in oil, on smooth boards or pieces of tin or any ~~available~~ ~~any~~  
 surface; painting landscapes, at times, but more often the portraits of  
 flowers and plants he came upon in his tours of investigation--cactus  
 plants, and yucca; flowers struggling for life, <sup>against odds</sup> even as he himself had strug-  
 gled.

There can be little doubt, moreover, that in these lonely, somewhat si-  
 lent years that followed close upon the terrible shock of being denied  
 admission to Highland, George Carver's intuitive understanding and grasp  
 of the laws at work in the invisible universe deepened and grew, along  
 with his growing understanding of the physical laws ~~and principles~~ govern-  
 ing his visible environment, ~~and it was out of this~~ <sup>out of which</sup> understanding ~~that~~  
 there later came his <sup>habitual</sup> ~~increasing~~ consciousness of his own intimate associa-  
 tion with an invisible Creator in working out <sup>an</sup> ~~the~~ eternal purpose which <sup>Abraham</sup>  
~~the heart of the Universe~~ <sup>thru the ages runs</sup>. It seems probable, also, that during these years  
 following the Highland incident, there came to him in some measure at  
 least a sense of the responsibility <sup>he</sup> must ultimately assume for helping  
 to secure for his own people the actuality of that emancipation and free-  
 dom which had been proclaimed for them at the end of the Civil War.

Having finally come to the conclusion that farming was an almost in-  
 evitable failure on his "Dry Claim", and probably longing, moreover, for  
 companionships and opportunities not to be found in Beeler, George acted  
 on the suggestion of a friend, sold out his claim, and made his way east  
 and north to the little town of Winterset, in Iowa, a little southwest of  
 Des Moines. It was his intention to begin a greenhouse here, but when he  
 had arrived and looked over the situation, it did not seem to him that  
 there was much chance for success at such a venture in Winterset, so he  
 gave up his original idea and found a job as cook in the Schultz hotel.  
 Later, purchasing a small hand laundry, he set himself up in business as  
 a laundryman, living alone in a tiny cottage near the edge of town, and



baking special cakes for women of the town as a side-line industry--again bringing into practical use the lessons in cooking and cleaning begun with Mrs. Carver at Diamond Grove.

One memorable Sunday night, <sup>according to</sup> following his usual custom, he went into a church for the evening service. Coming in quietly he took a seat ~~in the~~ <sup>near</sup> near the door, and joined the congregation in singing the hymns with that genuine joy and satisfaction he always experienced in singing. In the choir the soprano soloist, Mrs. J.M. Milholland, wife of a doctor of the town, heard the high sweet tenor voice, identified it with the young man singing with such evident enjoyment from the rear of the church, and set out, after the service, to find out who he was. Learning that he was George Carver, and employed at the hotel, Mrs. Milholland <sup>the next day</sup> sent her husband, the doctor, ~~the~~ <sup>next</sup> day to the hotel to enquire about George and to invite him to come and talk with her.

The result was a friendship which lasted until the day of Mrs. Milholland's death in 193<sup>5</sup>, and one which proved to be of extraordinary significance to the boy. Mrs. Milholland knew something of singing, and wished to learn to paint. George, self-taught, knew something of painting and wanted to know better how to sing. So it was that their agreement was ~~made~~: They would exchange lessons. George would give Mrs. Milholland instruction in painting, and she would teach him to vocalise. She must have been an extraordinarily wise and discerning woman, for she evidently saw in this boy possibilities of which he himself was only half aware, and not only saw them but had the insight and devotion to provide the constant stimulus of understanding interest and confident encouragement that would bring these latent capacities into fuller growth and fruition. As their acquaintance went along, she would have him come at the end of each day to <sup>talk</sup> ~~discuss its happenings~~ with her and with her husband, telling <sup>them</sup> ~~her~~ what he had done during the day; commenting on its occurrences. It is impossible to measure the value of such a companionship to George Carver in ~~xxx~~



~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ in those days; impossible to estimate its significance for all his ensuing days.

*But* there is ample evidence of the fact ~~that~~ this companionship was mutual in its values ~~and~~ not only while George was in Winterset, but <sup>for</sup> thruout <sup>very</sup> the following years, Mrs. Milholland herself has made this very clear in an ~~unpublished~~ manuscript ~~whichxxxxxxx~~ concerning George Carver, written several years before her death, but never published. "His experience in our Iowa town~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ with no higher school of learning," she wrote, "was far from what his nature craved. For this reason he very soon started what might be called a private school ~~for~~ himself, and the hours for each branch were as rigidly enforced as in school where there are many students.... During these days there were many who greatly enjoyed being permitted to see his collection of Nature's stores, and were made to marvel at the beautiful specimens which resulted from his method of polishing.....His gift for placing upon canvas reproductions of ~~the~~ beautiful flowers and plants was a joy, not only to himself, but to those who saw in them the perfect likeness to the study from which they had been taken. This was one of his pastimes on his Kansas claim, we judged from the large number of nature studies which he had when he came to our Iowa town... These were given later to friends in Winterset.... While he may have been an enigma to many from his boyhood days, he certainly was such to those who appreciated something of his rare character and abilities in his first days in our State.... Even in those days before collegiate doors had opened to him, one of man's greatest faculties, the power of observation, had been very well developed so that he had a wonderful fund of knowledge. Those who expected little or nothing were astonished at the ready answers which came to the most complicated questions, and found it a pleasure to be in his company. He was ever alert to lend from his resourceful powers to his friends, and many were his acts of kindness in the matter of placing plants--something which only those who had learned the secret of plant life



could successfully do. And no effort seemed too much for him to obtain for some friend a coveted fern or bulb."<sup>3</sup>....

Other intimate glimpses of George's life during his Winterset days have been given by another woman who knew and was interested in him then. "I first met him," writes Mrs. J.M. Robbins, "in the home of Dr. Milholland when he was engaged in giving Mrs. Milholland lessons in painting, though I had known him by sight, for he lived all alone in a small cottage at the edge of town on the street by which I came into town from the farm. I frequently would see him seated at the supper table with the door open. I could not help noticing how nicely everything was arranged, just as precise as though he were ~~expanding~~ entertaining company. Then, too, I frequently passed him on the streets carrying very carefully ~~an~~ ~~arm~~ full of fine white shirts which he had laundered (This was when shirts had to be polished very shiny and stiff)

"The second time I met him was in Sunday School in the Methodist church. I was a visitor in the class and I well remember how amused he was at a remark I made ... He made allusion to it afterward when he was spending a few days in our home. It is not plain to me now how he came there. I had a son in his late teens at home then. I think he found Carver rambling in the woods in the hill above the house and invited him in. Anyway he had a basket on his arm and said he was looking for botanical specimens. He was suffering from a pretty bad case of tonsillitis and asked him to remain until he was better as I had a good remedy that I used with good results. So he remained until he was well. Being a very busy housewife, I left his entertainment to the boy who seemed greatly interested in him. I remember one conversation they had in particular. He was trying to get my son to consent to go with him to college, and he said he was too old. Carver said, "Look at me". The boy <sup>had</sup> found a huge petrified tooth of some prehistoric animal, and Carver told him he would take it and have it classified and find out what it was. When he sent it back he said it was the tooth of a mastodon. It seemed big enough for a whole jaw bone.



"How did he look ? Tall, angular, and somewhat stooped/. He was dressed plainly, neat and clean. His voice was very peculiar, almost feminine. He was interested most in Botany and painting in oil. I shall never forget the expression of disgust on his face when he saw the plight Mrs. Milholland had her brushes in. He could not help exclaiming: "O, your brushes ! Your brushes !" 4

Mrs. Milholland may not have kept her brushes clean, but she did continue to prod George daily with the idea of going back to school. "She kept after me about it all the time," he said with a reminiscent chuckle when discussing it ~~years~~ afterward. "She would say, 'Now George, you've got to go back to school. You know you ought to be in school.' And I would answer, 'Yesn but how CAN I? I've just gotten a start with my laundry here. I still owe \$ 40 on the equipment I bought. How CAN I go back to school ?'"

"The idea kept bothering me, though, until it came to be an almost continual voice, ding-donging in my ~~xxxx~~ mind: 'You ought to go back to school. You know youn ought to be in school'. Finally one day in midsummer, I suddenly stopped in the midst of a piece I was ironing, left my ironing board and went over to the window and stood looking out for a while. Then I heard my own voice speaking, aloud and with sudden determination: 'Well, I'll GO back to school then'."

*Thus was* So the matter ~~was~~ settled *and* From the decision made on that summer afternoon there was to be no turning back. From that time on he began to plan again for college, and to find extra ways of making the moneyn essential to the plan's beginning. In the ~~adjoining~~ adjoining county of Warren there was a school that would raise no racial barrier against him--Simpson college, in the town of Indianola. And so it was to Simpson that his thoughts and plans now turned, ~~the~~ *his* years of drifting done.



VI

College Years - Simpson and Ames



## VI- College Years - Simpson and Ames

Simpson College, an ~~endowed~~ co-educational institution organized under the auspices of the Des Moines Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, had, at the time of Georg Carver's arrival on its campus in the fall of 1890, a faculty of 17 and a student body of approximately 300. According to the college catalogue for 1891-1892, three buildings comprised the entire plant: 1- College Hall, containing the chapel, society halls, and recitation rooms; 2- Science Hall, which housed the laboratory, museum, study and recitation rooms of the Normal School, music rooms, and "an elegant Art room immediately under the sky-light"; and 3- a Ladies' Hall, which afforded "good facilities for accomodating young ladies with rooms and board". Men students found rooms in ~~ppivate~~ homes or in club groups, sometimes boarding themselves "in companies of two to six". Tuition fees for the three terms, fall, winter, and spring, were \$ 15, \$12, and \$10 in the College; slightly less in the Preparatory School.

Concerning the town of Indianola, this catalogue states "The last general census gave it 2,400 inhabitants.. It has two railroads, is easy of access... is unusually quiet and pleasant, presenting to the students as few unworthy attractions and allurements to vice as any town in the state". Three courses ~~were~~ --Philosophical, Scientific, and Clasical-- were offered in the college. In addition, there were the Schools of Music, of Art, of Business; the Normal School; and the Preparatory School. The president of the College, Rev. Edmund M. Holmes, was also professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy. ~~The~~

The chemical laboratory is described as containing an abundance of ap-



paratus not only for demonstrations before the class but also for "individual work ~~on~~ on the part of the students". The museum contained extensive collections--Geological, Botanical, Zoological, and Mineralogical-- which were used "not only for illustrations before the various classes, but in individual and original work by the students". The Art rooms are pictured as "large, airy, and pleasant, furnished with casts, a large number of colored studies, objects for still life study, easels, ets., with a system of steam heating and sky lights making work possible at all seasons." There were Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations; daily services of worship in the chapel; "The Simpsonian", a fair-sized student monthly publication; four Literary societies; lectures during the year by "prominent men". In the statement of the General Purpose of the College, there is this significant statement: "The faculty regard the true function of teaching to be to help the student think, observe, and investigate for himself."

This, then, was the college to which George Carver came in September, 1890, to enroll as a special Art student, and undergraduate in the School of Music, and a special student in the Preparatory School. It was a congenial and nurturing environment for a youth who for a number of years already had been " thinking, observing, and investigating for himself"; who wished to study Art; who loved Music; and who greatly desired to live in an atmosphere of simple, kindly religious thought and feeling, ~~a friend among friends.~~

George had been able, following his mid-summer decision to return to school, to earn enough money to pay the \$ 40 still due on his laundry equipment, and to take care of the essential tuition payments and fees incident upon his registration at Simpson. When all the necessary requirements had been met, he found himself left with exactly ten cents. Half of this went for corn meal, the other half for beef suet, and on this incredibly meagre supply of food he lived for about a week. "It took about that long", he afterward remarked,



"for people to know that I wanted and was equipped to do their laundry. After they found that out, things were much easier".

"Had his Winterset friends known of the very slender purse he carried to Indianola", Mrs. Milholland wrote, "his first days there might have been very different. But because of ~~this~~ constant resourcefulness, his friends did not dream but that the college laundry work, which had been promised him, would amply provide for all his needs".

Further information concerning his early days at Simpson is given by Mrs. W.A. Liston, who lived in Indianola at that time and was ~~also~~  <sup>fellow</sup> a student in the Art School : "One morning soon after Mr. Carver's arrival, Miss Etta Budd, who was the Art teacher, came to me and said, 'I have a talented boy who wants to study Art. He has asked to save my stove wood for his tuition, and will you find him a room ? He is a very promising young man, and we must help him.'

"I found that he had secured permission for the president of the college to occupy an old abandoned shack, and so I started out to look for him there. When I rapped at the door, and the young boy timidly opened it for me, so modest was his demeanor that I scarcely knew how to approach him. Something in his quiet manner made it difficult for me to state my real errand, but a sudden thought came to me and I found myself asking if he could do some sketching for me. I wanted to paint my flower garden, and needed some help with the sketching. This proved to be an entering wedge for our long acquaintance and continued friendship. Noticing in one corner of the room an old black bread pan half filled with corn meal and water, and a discarded old stove on which was a boiler filled with shirts and collars he was laundering for the students, I finally came to state my real errand, and told him of an available room he might secure near our home. Later he moved to



this room and was there thruout the year. I frequently saw him there, since the people from whom he secured the room were friends of mine whom I often visited.

"He was a constant surprise to me and to all who knew him. He had a number of interesting collections of geological and botanical specimens, which he would show and explain to any he found to be interested in such things. He also had many of his own paintings, mostly oils and all done from life. There was one very fine portrait of a yucca; he loved especially to paint novel flowers, it seemed. One day I found Mr. Carver working on some crochet patterns he was copying from a magazine, and, seeing my interest in his lace work, he brought out a large box of samples of designs he had found in many places. I looked at him in amazement and asked, 'But what are you going to do with all those patterns? Why all this work?'"

"I am going back south to my people later on", he said, "and I expect to use all these things in my teaching in the schools of the south."

"He was a popular boy with the students, his excellent tenor voice making him much sought after as a singer, particularly in the YMCA, an organization of which he was an interested and active member. I still have a picture of four boys who were leaders in the student YMCA in our vicinity at that time; Mr. Carver; another American; a Chinese; and a Japanese. They met at our home during a convention." <sup>3</sup>

Having no family to whom he might write the usual student letters home, George wrote frequently to his friends, Dr. and Mrs. Milholland, in Winterset. In the spring of his first year at Simpson we find him writing them of his progress in his studies, especially his painting; of his teacher's comments on his work; of his plans; of his plans and their care--comments interspersed with humorous references to jokes evidently mutually shared and enjoyed. In March, 1891, he writes:



"

Dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Milholland:

I shall try to write you a few lines in answer to yours of sometime ago. I was very glad to hear from you, and had begun to think you had forgotten where I was. My health is very good with the exception of a very bad cold I contracted yesterday ~~---my~~ working in the studio when there was a draft blowing through. However, I will take some quinine tonight and hope to feel better in the morning. I have trebbled the work I had last term and it keeps me very busy, and I beseech you, Dr., to wait until I come up and I will tell you the joke I have on you, it is very good indeed, so much better than the key. I am getting along very well with my painting, will begin flowers soon and then I will send the model for yours. I am painting independantly now and have been for some time. I am working on a very large marine 25 x 33 I think. My teacher says she is very sorry she did not know me when I came here and she would have let my talents run as they liked. She said today that in all her contacts with people she had never met anyone like ( --- ) and that I was going to excel in flowers. I am doing a great deal of her fancy designing and when the other pupils want to arrange the flowers they are painting and call on her, she calls on ( --- ) She farther told me that she had been watching my arrangements of flowers in my drawings and she had never seen me get them stiff and ungainly, and she is not going to let me copy a thing, but make my own designs and paint from nature. Also that she is not going to let me paint the common flowers at all like the rest are painting. She farther paid me two very pleasing compliments today. She is painting a large panel from one of my original drawings, it is cactus and the yucca of the plains. I have done all the cactus, that is, all that has been done, and she says she firmly believes she could not do them to look at all to look as I have them and she wants me to finish them for her.



" Well, here it is nearly 11 o'clock Sunday evening of the next week and your letter not finished. I hope to be able to finish it this time. I have been trying to write ever since I received your letter as I was so very glad to hear from you. I have been quite sick since you wrote and had to be excused from school one afternoon but I am better now. I get a scolding nearly every day about working so hard by my teacher. We will have vacation in a week for one week. I want to go up to Des Moines during that time. I have been waiting to paint or rather get an idea of the transparent work in flowers before sending you the copy. I am painting flowers now. I have nearly finished one very large marine and am painting on an original design of the cactus and yucca like my teacher's only very much larger, the canvas is 22 x 48 inches.

" The people are very kind to me here and the students are wonderfully good. They took into their heads that I was working too hard and had not home comforts enough and they dubbed together and bought me three real nice chairs and a very nice table. They left them for me while I was at school. I have the name unjustly of having one of the broadest minds in school. My teacher told me the other day that she is sorry she did not find me out sooner so she would have planned differently for me. Well, this subject is getting very monotonous and was before I begun it but I thought you would like and be interested in knowing what they thought of me. Please don't let anyone see this letter but the homefolks.

"The Scott Brown and the Eclectic are very highly recommended, the Eclectic especially. I don't know anything about the former but presume it is good as the president recommends it. If you are thinking of investing much in orchids I think you will regret it as they are very hard to raise and you will meet with a failure on every hand almost. I will send you the names of two of the cheapest, they belong to the butterfly family, they come very highly recommended and are said to be of easy culture. One is



spotted and the other is a beautiful purple, very fine, this one is 50 cents and the other 35. You can get them of WM. H. Maule, 1711 Filbert St. Philadelphia.

Well, D., you may expatiate as much as you please on the key question, I hope you enjoy it and will keep right after your turkey as you will not when I come up again for my joke on you is so good that it will monopolise all the time. Nearly 12:00, please excuse me and write sooner than you did before. My best respects to all, I remain your humble servant of God. I am learning to trust and realise the blessed results from trusting in Him everyday. I am glad to hear of your advancement spiritually and financially. I regard them also as especial blessings of God.

Sincerely yours,

George W. Carver "

And again, in April, 1891, he writes:

"Dr. and Mrs. Milholland, dear friends:

Since you wrote me I have been to Des Moines and back again. It was very muddy, but I had a nice time. I was to see your sister, Mrs. Maley, and took dinner with her. I intended to have gone and seen her the next day but could not get my business closed soon enough. She was very anxious to have me tell you what I thought of her sick boy. I really think it is a severe throat trouble and not his lungs and with the proper care of himself I think he will get well. When about his age I was in almost exactly the same condition if not worse with my throat which resulted in the loss of my voice, partially, for a number of years. I thank you very much for the seed, part of them are up. My plants are not looking so well, what I have. I lost all of my foliage during the holiday vacation by putting them in a ~~dark~~ cellar that was too damp for them. My roses are just beginning to grow again. I want to try to root one of each for you if I can. I am getting along with my painting quite nicely, have not as yet finished that very large piece I was working on when I last wrote you. My teacher sends her best respects to



you and also sends repeated invitation for you to come down.

" I ~~am~~ am taking better care of myself than I have. I realise that God has a great work for me to do and consequently I must be very careful of my health. You will doubtless be surprised to learn that I am taking both vocal and instrumental music(Piano) this term. I don't have to pay any direct money for my music, but pay for it in paintings. They heard me sing several times and then they gave me no rest until I took it, or rather consented to. They are very kind and take especial pains with me; I can sing up to high D and three octaves below. I have only had one lesson. He told some of the students that he thought he could develop some wonderful things out of my voice, or words to that effect.

"I hope your orchids are doing well. I saw some of that variety in bloom while in Des Moines, they are very pretty indeed. I wish you would send me a bulb of that oxalis like we got from Miss Siders last fall. You can put it in a tiny box and send it by mail; I lost mine. I have two double fringed purple petunias(slips) I think they are both growing, if you haven't any I will send you one. You can't imagine how much good the reading of your letter done me, and tell Doctor that I enjoy his preaching very much and that I will finishe arithmetic this time key or no key. I would like to come up a day or so before I go to Ames and then you could see and copy some of the flower work as I would bring some with me. Mrs. Maley wants to be there too if she can should I come.

" I am glad the outlook for the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ is so good. We are having a great revival here, 40 seeking last night and 25 rose for prayers at the close of the service. I did not go tonight. My best regards to all and to your nephew also as I suppose he is there now. Shall be glad to hear from you soon.

Geo. W. Carver"



The statement in the April letter, " I realise that God has a great work for me to do" , was not an idly made remark but a declaration of a deepening conviction. George had come to college with the desire to make painting his major field of study. He wanted to be an artist-- to paint the plants and flowers and things of Nature he had come to know with such intimate and abiding affection. But with the broadened horizons of knowledge and understanding that were natural outcomes of his college experiences, he came more and more to feel a sense of responsibility to his own race. His own experience had shown him something of the bonds by which his people still were enslaved; something of the difficulties to be met in ~~transforming such~~ transforming such bonds into the rights and responsibilities of free-~~men~~ born men. His increasing knowledge of History as well as of human nature, coupled with his intelligence and plain common sense, seemed to indicate that the most promising way out of bondage into freedom for his own people-- most of whom lived and would live for years to come in the agricultural south-- lay in the increasing knowledge and practise of better methods in the whole field of ~~raising~~ Agriculture.

By this time he was also somewhat aware of his own peculiar gifts of discernment in the so-called mysteries of soils and plants-- mysteries with which Agriculture is eternally concerned. As the days went along, <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~ simple but powerful religious faith ~~of the young man~~ -- a faith compounded somewhat of the teachings he heard in the churches, but even more of the constant sense of a creative Presence at work with men which had come of his long, quiet hours in woods and fields in ~~close~~ close communion with the Creator-- ~~this faith brought together the two powerful elements of his knowledge of the needs of his own people and his intimations concerning himself, fusing them into an inescapable conviction.~~

He wanted to be an artist . But if, by becoming a scientist, discovering and teaching more scientific ways of farming, he could be of more help to his own race than by becoming an artist, then he must study Science. Having come



Gradually ~~the~~ the simple but potent ~~to~~ <sup>inexorably</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>his</sup>  
~~present~~ religious faith which permeated, <sup>his</sup>  
~~deeply~~ ~~the~~ ~~thought~~ and feeling - bringing  
together these two powerful elements







those offered at Simpson. Consulting with his friends and teachers, he began to think of going to Iowa Agricultural College at Ames, Iowa (Now Iowa State College) hence his reference to "going ~~up~~ to Ames" in his April letter to the Milhollands. Ames was north of Indianola a distance ~~of~~ about 50 miles, and the Agricultural College there, a state-supported school. To Miss Budd, his Art teacher, probably belongs ~~most~~ credit for George's choice of Ames. Her father, Prof. J.L. Budd, was at that time Prof. of Horticulture on the Agricultural faculty there, and thus she was familiar with the special facilities and opportunities for scientific study available ~~there~~ for a student of George's abilities and interests.

"I will take him to Ames to my father", Mrs. Liston quotes Miss Budd as saying. "Carver will fit in beautifully there." <sup>6</sup>

This she did, and thus we find George W. Carver registered as a student at Ames in September, 1891, altho he was still registered as a special student in Art at Simpson both in 1891 and 1892. Among others on the Agricultural faculty at Ames at that time were Prof. Budd, beforementioned; L.H. Pammell, prof. of Botany; James Wilson, prof. of Agriculture and later U.S. Sec. of Agriculture; and H.C. Wallace, ass't prof. of Agriculture, <sup>+ also, later</sup> all of whom became intimately interested in George and gave evidence of their interest in most practical and helpful ways.

"Miss Etta Budd interested herself in the boy because of his artistic ability", wrote Prof. Pammell, commenting on George's arrival at Ames. "She came to me one morning and asked if I could give Mr. Carver some employment. I told her the only job I had was a janitor's job, but I would be glad to give this to him, which I did. The next thing was to find a rooming place for him, for rooms were hard to get at Ames then. I allowed Mr. Carver to use my office downstairs on the first floor of old North Hall, now demolished, and I moved back to the second floor. Mr. Carver had this room during the entire time he was connected with the college." <sup>7</sup>



Prof. Budd placed him in charge of the green houses, and instructed him to go to the commissary dept. to arrange for his admission into the boarding hall. Here the discouraging problem of racial discrimination arose to confront him again. "No colored boy comes into this college", he was told. "You cannot eat with the white boys".

Writing his friend, Mrs. Liston, of the matter, George asked her advice as to what to do. There seemed to be feeling against him because of his color, he said, yet he greatly desired to stay on in school here at Ames. What should he do?

Receiving his letter, Mrs. Liston lost no time in putting on her best dress and hat and taking a train for Ames. There she found Miss Budd and told her what had happened.

"Stand by him", Miss Budd is quoted as saying. "My father is going to keep him where he is".

And stand by him Mrs. Liston did. She had dinner with the head carpenter's wife (a graduate of an Eastern college) in the basement room where George was having his meals with the hired hands. Afterwards she walked with him over the campus, staying until evening.

"The following day", he reported to her late, "everything was different. The ice was broken, and from that time on, things went very much easier." 8

At Ames, as at Simpson, it was of course necessary for George to provide his own means of livelihood, and here again he found original and unique ways of meeting this continuous need. To the janitor's job and the supervision of the green houses he added the work of masseur for the college <sup>football</sup> athletic teams, gaining experience thereby which was to be of value to him later when he began his experiments in the use of massage in the treatment of limbs wasted and dwarfed by disease. And now and then, when special need arose, he sometimes made and sold "big hominy", a food made of the kernels of corn and by many considered quite delicious.



The suspicions and antagonisms arising out of prejudice against his color, and which had made his first days at Ames discouraging~~ing~~ difficult, could not ~~for~~ long stand against the continuous presence of his kindly, humourous spirit; his unassuming, ~~xxxx~~ earnest endeavors to do his work well; his obvious endowment of distinctive and unique abilities. It is no doubt true that for many of his fellow students he remained an oddity and a curiosity. No other ~~xxxxxx~~ Negro student was at Ames at that time; and for many of the students, coming as they did from communities with small, if any, percentages of colored people in their populations, even the sight of a Negro was ~~xxxxxxxx~~ a rare experience. In spite ~~xxxxxx~~ of this fact, however, George found genuine, warm friends among both students and faculty, and entered into the extra-curricular affairs of ~~the~~ student life on the campus with zest and keen enjoyment.

In the college cadet corps he attained the rank first of ~~cadet~~ second lieutenant, then of cadet captain, and was with the battalion accompanying Gov. Boies to the World's Fair in Chicago in 189 - (When jokingly brought to task <sup>once</sup> later by his friends about having been such a military man, he was accustomed to reply, rather sheepishly, that he liked the uniforms and the Music ! ) In the YMCA here, as at Simpson, he found congenial companions and interests, becoming an <sup>President</sup> integral part of a Prayer and Mission group which was one of ~~the~~ many hundreds on many campuses across the country which were linked together in the Student Volunteer Movement, a vital force in <sup>the religious life of campuses</sup> American student life for many student generations. A small group of these students were accustomed to meet regularly as a reading and prayer group in the office of Prof. Wilson, and George Carver was among them. For two summers he was sent as a delegate from Ames to the summer conference of the student YMCA held annually at Lake Geneva in Wisconsin.

In addition to these various activities he carried on along with his studies and his work, George yet found time for his habitual long excursions



of investigation about the countryside, and for quiet communion with his silent friends of the woods and fields. On some of these walks he had with him friends or acquaintances, sharing with them his stores of information, whetting their curiosity concerning the mysteries at hand, sometimes even succeeding in sending them out on discovery jaunts of their own. A small boy <sup>named Henry</sup> sometimes accompanied him, the son of Prof. Wallace, ~~a boy who is now~~ <sup>a boy who</sup> ~~Secretary of Agriculture in the United States~~, Henry Wallace, speaking at a meeting of scientists and educators at the Waldorf-Astoria on Feb. 23, 1939, declared, "When I was a small boy, George Carver introduced me to the mysteries of botany and plant fertilization. Later on I was to have an intimate acquaintance with plants myself, because I spent a good many years breeding corn. Perhaps that was partly because this scientist who belonged to another race ~~had~~ had deepened my appreciation of plants in a way I could never forget."

*Insert* On the meantime, Carver was deepening his own understanding and appreciation of plants. He still had his own garden, and in it, among other things, were various varieties of ~~Amaryllis~~ <sup>have</sup> with which he was carrying on experiments in cross-breeding, experiments which ~~were~~ continually been carried even until today. ~~Each morning there was a fresh flower or some~~ Each morning there was a fresh flower or some sprig of a plant in his coat lapel-- a habit which became in time not only a life-long custom but something of a symbol, as well.

During vacations, especially at Christmas ~~times~~, he went to visit friends in Indianola and Winterset. "His abilities were equal to almost any occasion," writes Mrs. Milholland. Once when he was with us at Christmas time, we asked him to be master of ceremonies in the arranging of presents, and in the morning the grotesque figure in our dining room, with the gifts artistically arranged, afforded a time of much merriment. His power of adaptability was a great factor in the making of friends. Mr. Carver was with us over the Sabbath once when the president of Simpson College preached at the Methodist



church, and through the happy greeting exchanged by president and student, one could readily recognise the warm friendship existing between them. <sup>10</sup> "9

Of his work as a student, Prof. Pammell said, "He was the most wonderful collector I ever have known, much interested in collecting fungi, among other things". <sup>10</sup> The most significant testimony to the estimate placed by his teachers upon his work, however, lies in the fact that when he received his B.S. degree on November 14, 1894, he had already been offered a place on the Agricultural staff at Ames as Assistant Station Botanist. In a letter to the Milhollands, dated October 15, 1894, George writes:

"My dear Friends:

I was indeed more than pleased to hear from you, had you not written you would have received a letter from me soon as I intended writing..... I am glad to know that you are all well and that the Lord is blessing you so unsparingly..... The Lord is wonderfully blessing me and has for these many years. I cannot begin to tell you all. I presume you know that I had some paintings at the Cedar Rapids Art Exhibit, was there myself, and had some work selected and sent to the World's Fair, and was also sent to Lake Geneva twice to the Y M C A Summer conference as a representative from our college.

" And the many good things the Lord has entrusted to my care are too numerous to mention here. The last but not least I have been elected assistant Station Botanist. I intend to take a post graduate course here, which will take two years, one year of residence work and one of non-residence work. I hope to do my <sup>non-</sup>residence work next year and in the meantime take a course at the Chicago Academy of Arts and the Moody Bible Institute. I am saving all the pennies I can for that purpose and am praying a great deal. I believe more and more in prayer all the time.

"I thank you very much for your kind invitation to visit you, ~~nothing~~ would give me greater pleasure and I will do so if I can but I will have to cancel



some other contemplated visits. There are so many that are so determined that I shall make them a visit this winter. But I think I will get to see you as I have much to tell you and ask your advice about.

"I have been to a reception nearly every night <sup>last</sup> ~~this~~ week and the cards are out for part of this week, one given by the president of the college and several downtown that are not connected with the institution. I don't pretend to go to all of them.....

"Enclosed please find catalogue and classification of our Mission library which had been secured and paid for this year. Our band two years ago was organised as a reading circle with 3 members including myself. We now have a membership of about 29 with 2 volunteers.\* God blessyou.

Geo. W. Carver "

Mrs. Liston went up to Ames from Indianola to see him receive his degree of Bachelor of Science, in November, 1894. She found a situation very different from the one she had discovered on her first visit to him there. He came to the train to meet her wearing a fawn-colored suit, with new hat, gloves, and shoes-- an out-fit which was a graduation gift from a number of his student friends. Mrs. Liston had brought a bouquet of red carnations, the class flower; another bouquet came from his Art class; and still another from three girls who were former fellow students in the Art school at Simpson. "He was very happy", Mrs. Liston writes, "and very proud of his new suit". During the exercises he read the class poem which he himself had written. Afterwards he took Mrs. Liston to dinner, not in the basement this time, but in the student dining room, where they sat at a professor's table, with the young Bachelor of Science pouring tea. 11

Two years later, on November 10, 1896, Geo. W. Carver was granted the degree of Master of Science, ~~xxxxxx~~ the first of its kind ever awarded a student at Ames. He had not carried out his idea of spending one of his graduate ( \* \* Volunteer for Mission work(Christian) in the Foreign Field )



years in Chicago, studying at the Art Institute and at Moody Bible School, but had stayed on at Ames, teaching and carrying on his independant research work and painting, while fulfilling the requirements for his Master's degree. Although he had been assured the continuation of his place on the college faculty, he was somewhat concerned as to what he should do when he had completed his work for the new degree. An offer came to him to take a position with a florist. His reply was brief, and couched in the crisp, emphatic terms which came to be characteristic of his replies to queries or comments he considered somewhat ridiculous: "I told them", he said, "that I hadn't gotten my education to learn to arrange flowers for the dead". No, not for the dead, for it was the living for whom he was concerned. There was a great longing in his heart to return to the south, to work among his own people who had once been slaves but were now trying to become ~~xx~~ free men. It was for this that he had prepared himself. Now would the chance come ?

In the spring of his last year of graduate study, it did come. In ~~xxx~~ 1891, by a legislative Act carrying a small annual appropriation for maintenance, a Normal School for colored teachers had come into being in the village of Tuskegee, Alabama, with Booker T. Washington, who had been born a slave, ~~xxxx~~ as its Founder and first Principal. The school under his inspired leadership had grown incredibly in its 15 years of life, and now Dr. Washington needed a well-equipped man to become ~~to~~ head of a department of Agriculture, one of the most important divisions of the school's total program. In his search for such a man, his attention was drawn to George Carver, a graduate student at Ames, a young man ~~xxxxxx~~ recommended as highly qualified for the place by his teachers, Profs. Wilson, Wallace, and Pammell. So it was that in April, 1896, correspondence destined to be of lasting significance began between Dr. Washington and young Carver. The replies of the latter to Dr. Washington's letters give the gist of the story :



"  
Office of Botanist  
L.H. Pammel, Professor  
C.B. Weaver Assistants  
Emma Sirrine in  
Collecting  
Pres. Booker T. Washington  
Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

Iowa Agricultural College"  
Department of Botany  
Ames, Iowa

Geo. W. Carver  
Station Assistant  
Robert Combs, Collection  
in Cuba  
April 12, 1896

My dear Mr. Washington:

Yours of April 1 just received, and after a careful consideration of its contents, I now venture a reply. It is certainly very kind of you to take the interest you have in me.

Of course it has always been the great ideal of my life to be of the greatest good to the greatest number of 'my people' possible, and to this end I have been preparing myself for these many years, feeling as I do that this line of education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom to our people.

Please send me catalogues and any other data you may have with reference to your Institution, so I may get some idea of the present scope of your work and its possible and probable extension. I should consider it a great privilege to have an interview with you, but cannot say if I will be in the West or no....

I am so glad you met our dear Brother Marshall. I dearly love him. Should I not accept the position above mentioned I will be here at the college all summer except when my occupation calls me away. At the next writing I hope to give you a more definite answer. May the Lord bless and prosper your work.

Geo. W. Carver "

April 21, 1896

"Yours of the 17th inst. received and the contents carefully noted. I hasten to reply because I must decide very soon whether I am to stay here, or go somewhere else in the south, or come to you.

I am very much pleased with the spirit of your letter, and assure you if I come money will not be the sole object., only secondary.... I already have



a position here as you will see by the letter heads, and one of the professors told me today they would raise my wages here if I would stay. But I expect, as I have already stated, to go to my people and I have been looking for some time at Tuskegee with favor. So the financial feature is at present satisfactory. I shall be pleased to do all I can to cooperate with you in the broadening of the work and making it far-reaching in extent.

Enclosed please find the four year's course of Agriculture from which I graduated in 1894. I had special training in the ones I have marked aside from the regular course. I would like to know if your course in Agriculture will be something of this kind, and what I will be expected to teach. I have been for several years making large collections along economic lines and should I come to you I will bring my collections and cabinets with me for use.

When would it be necessary for me to come ? I will finish my post graduate work this fall. If the course of study is not something out of my range, I will accept the offer. I shall await an answer with a considerable degree of anxiety as I must decide soon. May God bless you and your work.

Sincerely yours, Geo. W. Carver

May 8, 1896

"..It affords me great pleasure to be identified as one of the faculty of Tuskegee...My Post graduate work has been arranged to run thru the College year which closes in November...However, if vitally important, I can arrange to come to you at your opening or shortly after ....

Geo. W. Carver

June 21, 1896

"...I have arranged to meet you at Waterloo on July 3rd and will be there Providence permitting. Two of my professors will endeavor to meet you at Spirit Lake. Professors Wilson and Wallace hope you can see them there....



September 12, 1896

" .... Yours of a few days ago awaited me upon my return and should nothing prevent, I will leave here about October 7th, sooner if I can arrange to do so.

Very respectfully yours,

Geo- W. Carver "

*He long had sought*

So was the matter settled. For George W. Carver, the ~~long sought~~ chance had come. <sup>coming</sup> And ~~it had~~ found him ready-- well-equipped, eager, filled with buoyant confidence and faith . He would begin his work at Tuskegee, Alabama, in October, 1896.



## VII- Tuskegee Origins

During the years when George Carver on the lonely plains of Kansas, in a small town in Iowa, and on college campuses at Indianola and Ames, dreamed of the day when he should return to the south and worked to prepare himself for it, certain potent factors, facts, and circumstances-- in those strange ways ~~indicative~~ <sup>Smiles</sup> indicative of an invisible ~~but dependable infinite~~ Pattern and Design-- were bringing into being the environment essential for his dream's eventual fulfillment.

"In the Spring of the year 1881- just after the close of that period of some achievements and many tragic blunders known as the Reconstruction--four factors were effectively united for the first time in the lower south in an educational movement to help the Negro. These four--all of vital importance--were the Negroes themselves, the southern white people, the government, and northern philanthropy. Substantial elements in all these groups wanted to advance the cause of Negro education, and equally important, they agreed on the main lines of a policy". Thus spoke the Rev. Anson Phelps Stokes in an historical address on the occasion of Founders' Day at Tuskegee, in April, 1931.

"The negroes were represented by Lewis Adams, a former slave of Tuskegee. He was highly regarded by all the best elements in the community and it was he who first urged the establishment of a normal school for his race in the town. He had never had a day's ~~of~~ formal ~~education~~ schooling, but he could read and write, and had learned in slavery to be a tinsmith.

"The government of Alabama was represented by two members of the State Legislature from Macon County--W.F. Foster, in the Senate, and Arthur L. Brooks in the House--who secured the passage of the Act establishing the school--the bill being passed by the House in December, 1880, and by the Senate in Feb, 1881. It proposed to establish a Normal School for colored teachers at Tuskegee and to contribute \$2,000 a year for this purpose ...



"The white citizens of the South--descendants of the old-time slaveholding aristocracy--were represented by Geo. W. Campbell, a merchant and banker of Tuskegee....

"The philanthropy of the North--deeply interested in the education of the freed Negroes--was represented by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, a former General in the Union army. He was born of pioneer New England and Pennsylvania missionary stock in the Hawaiian Islands, where he had seen the value of industrial training, and was educated at Williams College. During the Civil War, as a commander of Negro troops, he had become specially interested in the Negro, and at its close as superintendant of the Freedman's Bureau of the Ninth District of Virginia, and with the aid of the American Missionary Association he had opened in 1868,,,, a school at Hampton for the moral and industrial training of Negro youth. This was formally incorporated as the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute under a charter of the General Assembly of Virginia in 1870....

"Such were the four 'conspirators', representing four different groups, in one of the most pregnant movements in educational history. They were all at one in believing the Negro people of Alabama--only 16 years out of slavery.. needed education, and that the problem of properly educating the former slaves of the State--who at the time of Emancipation numbered 435,132, or about one-third of the total population--could only be met by training Negro teachers

"The state had passed thru troubled waters as a result of the aftermath of the Civil War, but during the previous decade there had been substantial progress..... public education was beginning to be in the air, and although the white population was receiving <sup>the</sup> ~~x~~ greater share of attention, ~~the~~ Negroes were not entirely overlooked. In the year 1880, just prior to the founding of Tuskegee Institute, 72,007 of them, averaging 50,184 daily, were in public schools, albeit the average school term was only 67 days and the total appropriation for all public schools in the state both white and colored



was only \$397,465.... It was under these conditions that the Legislature passed the Act 'to establish a Normal School for colored teachers at Tuskegee' - An Act which provided also for an annual appropriation of \$ 2,000 for the maintenance and support of the School, and for a board of three commissioners who should have the "direction, control, and supervision" of the school".

"It is specially interesting to note that this Board named by the State of Alabama under its new constitution ~~in~~ 1875 , and after the close of the Reconstruction period, included a Negro as well as two white men--~~Lewis Adams~~ (Lewis Adams) Thus provision was made for that happy cooperation between the races in the final determination of all policies which has always marked the Institute..."

"The stage was now set for the first attempt on the part of the State government in Alabama, or in any one of the Gulf states, to tackle seriously the problem of Negro education thru the training of teachers. A cooperative spirit on the part of the four groups named was assured, but nothing could be done without a leader. In the providence of God the leader appeared in the person of Booker Washington."....

This man, Booker T. Washington, had graduated at Hampton Institute in 1875; taught school and Sunday School in his former home town of Malden, West Va.; studied for a winter at Wayland Seminary in Washington; and returned to Hampton as a member of the staff, in charge of Indian students and director of the newly-established night school. Born a slave near Lynchburg, Va., he had known in his childhood the hard privations of utter poverty; had begun his own education in a Blue Back speller, ~~and then~~ had gone to school at night after long days of work in the salt and coal mines; and had made his own way thru Hampton Institute, resolved, as he later declared, to let no obstacle prevent him from putting forth the highest effort to fit himself to accomplish the most good in the world. <sup>3</sup>



vivid

In the ~~xixix~~, moving story of his life, "Up from Slavery", Booker T. Washington has left a stirring narrative of the circumstances surrounding his appointment as the head of the new school at Tuskegee, and of the incredible difficulties met and overcome in the founding of the school;

"In May, 1881, near the close of my first year in teaching the night-school, in a way I had not dared expect, the opportunity opened for me to begin my life work. One night in the chapel, after the usual chapel exercises were over, General Armstrong referred to the fact that he had received a letter from some gentlemen in Alabama asking him to recommend some one to take charge of what was to be a normal school for the colored people in the little town of Tuskegee in that state. These gentlemen seemed to take it for granted that no colored man suitable for the position could be secured, and they were expecting the General to recommend a white man for the place. The next day the General sent for me to come to his office, and much to my surprise, asked me if I thought I could fill the position in Alabama. I told him that I would be willing to try. According, he wrote to the people who had applied to him that he did not know of any white man to suggest, but if they would be willing to take a colored man, he had one he could recommend....

"Some time afterward, one Sunday evening during the chapel exercises, a messenger came in and handed the General a telegram. At the end of the exercises he read the telegram to the school. In substance, these were its words: 'Booker T. Washington will suit us. Send him at once'. There was a great deal of joy expressed among the students and teachers, and..I began to get ready at once to go to Tuskegee." 4

Arriving at Tuskegee in June, 1881, the young Principal, then 25 years of age, found no buildings, no apparatus, but "hundreds of hungry, earnest souls who wanted to secure knowledge". He spent a month traveling thru Alabama, studying the conditions among the people whom the school was to serve, advertising the new school, and making arrangements for its opening. What he



saw during this month left him "with a very heavy heart", and served to deepen his conviction that something more was needed than an imitation of "New England education as it then existed". "Mere book education", a few hours at the time, would not do for the children in the homes he had seen-- of this he was quite certain.<sup>5</sup> And it was out of this conviction, coupled with his knowledge of the theory and practise of Industrial education as carried on at Hampton under General Armstrong's direction, that the sturdy, ~~unshakeable~~ foundations of the Tuskegee idea of <sup>the meaning of</sup> education were hewn-- foundations, eventually, for one of the most significant and distinctive contributions yet made to American education.

On July 4, 1881, with 30 students and Washington as teacher, the school was formally opened, in an old church and a tumble-down shanty beside it. After 6 weeks Miss Olivia Davidson, a graduate of Hampton and Framingham, came to the school as co-teacher and also as co-consultant with the principal in all matters concerning the future as well as the immediate needs of the school. In a letter to his friends at Hampton, the earnest young Principal describes his school, his immediate plans, far-reaching ideals, his gratitude for various encouragements:

" I opened school last week. At present I have over forty students, anxious and earnest young men and women. I expect quite an increase in September and October. The school is taught at present, in one of the colored churches, which they kindly let us have for that purpose.

This building is not very well suited to school purposes, and we hope to be able to move to a more commodious place in a short time. The place referred to is on a beautiful and conveniently located farm of 100 acres, which we have contracted to buy for \$500. The state pays for tuition. The farm I hope to pay for by my own exertions and the help of others here. As a rule, the colored people of the South are not



and will not be able for years to ~~xxxx~~ board their children in school at ten or twelve<sup>per</sup> dollars ~~x~~ month, hence my object is, as soon as possible, to get the school on a labor basis, so that earnest students can help themselves and at the same time learn the true dignity of labor. And ~~in~~stitution for the education of colored youths can be but a partial success without a boarding department. In it they can be taught those correct habits which they fail to get at home. Without this part of the training they go out into the world with untrained intellects and their morals and bodies neglected. After the land is paid for, we hope to get a boarding department on foot as soon as possible.

"The good will manifested towards the school by both white and colored is a great encouragement to me to push the work forward. I have had many kind words of encouragement from the whites, and have been well treated by them in every way. The Trustees seem to be exceptional men. Whether I have met the colored people in their churches, societies, or homes, I have received their hearty cooperation and a 'God bless you' ".<sup>6</sup>

Despite these various encouragements, there were many staggering difficulties to be continually met and solved in the launching of such an adventure, not the least of which was the fact that Washington's idea of industrial education was received with extreme disfavor and deep distrust by many of his own race who wanted "merely book-learning", "associating ordinary manual labor in farm and shop with the degradation of slavery". This, however, was a discouragement which, like many others, ~~had not the power to~~ <sup>was eventually</sup> ~~stand for long in the white light~~ <sup>compelled</sup> and amazing outcomes of the Principal's consuming conviction.

The farm of 100 acres was purchased and paid for within five months, "the greater part of the money having been gotten from the white and colored people in the town of Tuskegee-- by holding festivals and concerts, and from small individual donations." <sup>17</sup> The main house <sup>on the farm</sup> had burned down, leaving <sup>but</sup>



four old buildings still <sup>now</sup> standing on the farm-- a cabin, an old kitchen, a stable, and a hen-house. These were repaired, and the School lost no time in moving into its new quarters.

"Our next effort", writes the Principal, " was in the direction of the cultivation of the land, so as to secure some return from it, and at the same time give the students training in Agriculture... We began with farming because we wanted something to eat.... the first animal possessed by the School was an old blind horse given us by one of the white citizens of Tuskegee".

As the need for a new building became imperative, brick-making was introduced on the campus, the first three burnings ~~ending~~ -- in kilns constructed by the students themselves-- ending in utter failure. But the dauntless Principal, having not a penny to invest in more materials, went to the town of Montgomery, pawned his watch for \$ 15, rallied his "discouraged and rather demoralised forces", and set to work again. This effort was blessed with success, the brick were made, and the erection of Porter Hall-- ~~xxx~~ by student labor-- began.

"From the very beginning at Tuskegee", wrote Washington, " I was determined to have the students do not only the agricultural and domestic work, but to have them erect their own buildings. My plan was to have them, while performing this service, taught the latest and best methods of labour, so that the school would not only get the benefit of their efforts, but the students themselves would be taught to see not only utility in labour, but beauty and dignity; would be taught, in fact, how to lift labour up from mere drudgery and toil, and would <sup>learn</sup> ~~xxx~~ to love work for its own sake. My plan was not to teach them to work in the old way, but to show them how to make the forces of nature--air, water, steam, ~~electricity~~, horse-power--assist them in their labour. "



Thus, from inauspicious and apparently insignificant beginnings, there came into being, under the leadership of a man whose far vision had the constant support of an invincible courage and a boundless faith, a great Experiment. "On that day, in July, 1881, when the modest, quiet, unassuming young man, Booker T. Washington, reported with a letter from General Armstrong his former teacher, and was cordially received and welcomed to the community by Mr. George W. Campbell, then it was that a form of cooperation began, the scope and effectiveness of which was destined to command the respect and admiration, not only of this country, but also of the entire civilised world".<sup>10</sup>

Thus, moreover, was "launched a program of educational practise based upon the theory of learning by doing, with the idea of making economically independent, self-respecting citizens. The fundamental conception of the whole program in this institution was that of learning to do more effectively society's work. This practise was opposed not only by the current educational theory but also by out-standing members of the Negro race who evidently were influenced by the dominant theory of education prevailing at that time.....

"It is interesting to note that the practise of Tuskegee, as sponsored by its leader, was to afford the best example of a new educational theory beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and developing up to the present time in the twentieth century. The extent to which this incomparable leader was conscious of the fact that he was making a contribution of profound significance to educational theory as well as practise, we do not know, but his wisdom in other respects leads us to believe that he saw farther than the immediate practical problem of equipping young men and women ~~xxxx~~ better for the responsibilities of life."<sup>11</sup>

Fifteen years passed, fifteen hard but rewarding years for Tuskegee and its Founder. New buildings stood on the campus; new industries were a part of its program. Almost a thousand students were now enrolled, representing 24 states. A night school was in session for students who must needs work



eight or ten hours a day. The Farmers8 Conference had been organised and annually brought to the campus hundreds of colored farmers who took home with them not only new knowledge of farming but something of Tuskegee's spirit. A hospital and nurse training school, as well as a Bible Training School, had been added to the curriculum. The U.S. Congress had made a gift to the school of 25,000 acres of mineral lands in northern Alabama.

And now, in 1896, there was urgent need for the presence on the faculty of an expert in Agricultural Science. ~~It was important that he should be~~  
~~— need for a~~ a man well-equipped to teach the students the mysteries of the soil and its mastery-- ~~this was, of course, too~~  
~~important.~~ But even more than this there was need for a scientist whose vision was at one with the vision of the Principal, and whose abilities could be counted on to measure up to the continually increasing opportunities for ~~that came~~  
~~wider~~ service knocking at the doors-- the hospitable doors-- of Tuskegee Institute.

And once again, "in the providence of God", ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxxx~~ a man amazingly endowed with the ability to meet the need was found and brought to Tuskegee, this time in the person of George W. Carver, ~~of Ames.~~



## VIII

### Early Years at Tuskegee

Traditional in the annals of Tuskegee is the story of the arrival of the new professor on a Sunday afternoon in October, 1896. The student sent to the train to meet him, arriving a little late, found Prof. Carver quietly examining some plants near the railroad station. It is a likely story, for the soil and plants of this southern state were different from the soil and plants of Iowa, and the alert curiosity of the young scientist undoubtedly went eagerly out to investigate the unfamiliar surroundings.

Arrived at the Institute, he established himself in ----- Hall, one of the residence halls for men, getting his meals with students and other faculty members in Alabama Hall. About 32 years of age, the new professor was a striking looking figure as he went about the campus. A photograph made of him during his late student days portrays him holding brushes and palette and standing beside one of his flower portraits-- dark-skinned, tall, straight, slender; a sensitive, somewhat wistful mouth beneath a neatly-trimmed mustache; a broad high forehead above the far-looking, comprehending eyes of an artist and a seer-- an appealing face of intermingled gentleness, discernment, and strength.

Insofar as actual laboratory equipment was concerned, Prof. Carver found that he had little to begin with. But there were things which he did find provided which were of much more importance to him. Nowhere else in America, certainly, and probably nowhere else in the world at that time could have been found an environment more ideal for his own tastes and purposes than he found at Tuskegee Institute. In the first place, it was in the south, and among those who, while not of his own actual blood kin, were yet of his own race. In the second place, in Booker T. Washington he found not only a wise counselor and rare friend, but a man of like mind and faith, vision and understanding, though with vastly different endowments; a man, moreover, who had abiding confidence in the contributions this new teacher brought, and would



bring, to Tuskegee. Again, here was urgent need for the stores of information, understanding and skill George Carver had soent a quarter of century gathering -need not only urgent and immediate, but of far-reaching, accumulative import. Agriculture here in the south was in desperate need of the help which Science, if interested, could give; and the Agriculture of the south was a matter of national, of international, significance. At Tuskegee there were also the "raw materials" for the experimental research and demonstrations essential to any plan or program involving such scientific aid-- soils, plants, students, teachers, contacts with the outside world-- channels already provided for the fresh and vitalising flow of the now desperately needed knowledge. Over and above and around all these provisions, Prof. Carver found also that nameless, intangible reality sometimes spoken of jestingly as "campus atmosphere": that invigorating mixture of care-free gaiety and poignant concern; of failures and achievements, discouragements and devotions; of the intimate impact and interplay of ideals and emotions, maturity and youth forever incident upon the relationships involved in the daily life of a campus. It was a congenial air for the young professor; for seven years he had lived in it, breathed the breath of its life. He was at home in it now at Tuskegee.

He was at home, moreover, with the necessity of securing tools and equipment for his work with little financial aid, hence was undismayed by the absence of laboratory supplies. Sending his students out to find old bottles, hollow reeds, cracked pieces of pottery--old cups and saucers and the like, he declared that the equipment in the head of a man was more important than that in the laboratory. Near at hand he gathered also the specimens for study and experiment. With the dawn each day he was out on the hills, in the fields, among the shrubs and plants, carrying his botany can and loading it with various soils, clays, diseased or unusual twigs and branches. These he took back to his makeshift laboratory, practical, useful specimens for his work.



own and his students' students' study.

These hours out-of-doors at dawn came to be more and more for him hours of quite communion-- communion with the invisible Creator thru the visible, lovely things of His Creation. This practise of early out-door communion became a lifelong habit, one never broken except for illness or inescapable other demands or interruptions.

The sight of this man with his arms filled with branches, his botany can <sup>to the residents of the vicinity</sup> ~~swing~~ over his shoulder, was a strange sight ~~in~~ the ~~vixinity~~ vicinity of Tuskegee, some of them thought he was a "herb doctor" out gathering his supplies. Dr. Washington relates that, noting the increasing number who came to the Institute to ask Prof. Carver questions about plants, he asked him one day, "How do all these people find out that you know about plants?"

"Well, it is this way", Carver answered. "Shortly after I came here I was going along one day with my botany can under my arm, looking for plant diseases and insect enemies. A lady saw what she thought was a harmless colored man with a strange-looking box under his arm, and she stopped me and asked if I was a peddler. I told her what I was doing; she seemed delighted and asked me to come and see her roses which were badly diseased. I showed her what to do for them, in fact, sat down and wrote it out for her. In this way, and in several other ways, it became noised abroad that there was man at the school who knew about plants. People began calling upon me for information and advice."

"I myself remember that several years ago a dispute arose downtown about the name of a plant; no one knew what it was. Finally one gentleman spoke up and said that they had a man out at the Normal school by the name of Carver who could name any plant, tree, bird, stone, etc., in the world, and if he did not know there was no use to look any farther. A man was put on a horse and the plant brought to Prof. Carver. He named it and sent it back. Since then Prof. Carver's laboratory has never been free from specimens of some kind".



Now were diseased plants and soils the only "specimens" brought to him for diagnosis and information. Mr. Davidson Washington, son of the Principal, was fond of relating the story of his pet goose. "All of the children around the campus thought Prof. Carver could do everything. So, when my pet goose got sick, I thought I would take it to Prof. Carver, but kept putting it off until one morning Father said, 'It's too late now; your goose is dead'. 'But I'll take him to Prof. Carver anyway', I answered, 'I know he can make my goose well'".

At the earnest request of Dr. Washington, the Alabama Legislatur in the session of 1896-97 passed a Bill "to establish a Branch Agricultural Experiment Station for the colored race and to make appropriations therefor-- to be located at Tuskegee and run in connection with the Normal and Industrial Institute". The Board of Control included the state commissioner of Agriculture, the president of the A and M College and the Director of the Experiment station at Auburn, and members of the Tuskegee Institute board of trustees who resided in Tuskegee. This Board was charge to "cause such experiments to be made at said station as will advance the interests of scientific Agriculture, and to cause such chemical analyses to be made as are deemed necessary". \$ 1500 out of the Agricultural fund was appropriated for equipment and improvement, Tuskegee Institute to furnish all necessary lands and buildings for use of the said station and school".

Prof. Carver was made Director of the new Experiment Station and consulting chemist. Thus, during his first year at Tuskegee, another channel was opened thru which he might come into intimate touch with the needs he had prepared himself to meet. The Institute catalogue for 1897-98 has this item concerning the Station: "A bulletin showing the experiments made and results obtained, as well as giving more detailed information respecting the Station, will be prepared during the coming year by the Director, Prof. Carver."

The title of this first bulletin, published as promised in 1898, is significant: "Feeding Acorns". Plainly, it was the purpose of the director of this



Experiment Station to bring together the knowledge of Science and the actual needs of the farmers. A farmer who owned nothing, who had not a penny to spend, was free to gather up the acorns that fell on the ground. And there was food value for livestock in acorns. Hence, first, a bulletin on "Feeding Acorns". A second bulletin in 1908 was concerned with "Experiments with sweet potatoes". Thus began the series of bulletins coming out from the Tuskegee Experiment station which has grown during a period of 41 years to a sizeable bulletin library, bulletins which, with but few exceptions, have been written by by the Station's Director.

The purpose of the Agricultural Department, as set forth in the School catalogue for 1897-98, was "to make the instructions practical as well as scientific, that the knowledge acquired by the student shall be of direct material aid to him in his future vocations as farmer, dairyman, or teacher. Geo. W. Carver is listed as Director and Instructor in Scientific Agriculture and Dairy Science. Five assistants were responsible for Practical Agriculture and Farm Management; Stock raising; truck gardening; horticulture; and the Dairy Herd. 975 students were enrolled at the Institute, representing 24 states.

November, 1897, saw the Slater-Armstrong Agricultural building stand ready for occupancy, and it was a matter of much gratification to Prof. Carver ~~that~~ to have his former teacher, Hon. James Wilson, then U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, come to make the address at the formal opening of the building. It was probably an occasion of no less gratification for the Secretary as well. It is of interest to note that the next year, 1898-99, the following courses were offered in the Agricultural Department: Horticulture, shop work, Live stock, Market gardening, Drawing, Economic Entomology, Botany, Bacteriology and Vegetable Physiology, Botany Cryptogamic, Agricultural Chemistry, Principles of Heredity, Seeds and Grasses, Practical Agriculture, Applied Botany, Vegetable Pathology, and Dairying. No more revealing commentary on the work of the Director of the Department is needed that that which lies inherent in a comparison of courses available in 1897-98 and in 1898-99. An interest <sup>the</sup> 3



During Prof. Carver's second year at Tuskegee there came one of those "great occasion days" that have characterised the Institute almost since its origin. Booker T. Washington had early formed a secret resolution that he would endeavor "to build up a school that would be of so much service to the country that the president of the U.S. would one day come to see it." <sup>4</sup> This desire was realised on. December 16, 1898, when not only Pres. McKinley himself, but Mrs. McKinley and all the Cabinet officers except one, most of them with their wives or other members of their families, came to see Tuskegee Institute. Learning that the President would come to Atlanta for the Peace Jubilee celebrating the close of the Spanish-American war, the Principal went to Washington to invite the President to come and see his School. The invitation was accepted, and "the morning of the 16th brought to the little city of Tuskegee such a crowd as it had never seen before; Citizens for miles around; the President's party; the Legislature of Alabama (Then in session in Montgomery) headed by the Governor and other State officials-- Parades, speeches, music, toasts.... And George Carver, with other members of the faculty and students, heard the President say, "Tuskegee Institute is ideal in its conception, has already a large and growing reputation in the country, and is not unknown abroad. I congratulate all who are associated in this undertaking for the good which it is doing". <sup>5</sup>

Carver knew many such "great occasion days" at Tuskegee, but for him the ordinary in-between days were full and rich and interesting. His work demanded long hours of concentrated study and experiment, ceaseless and patient devotion to the task. Requests and queries came to him in gradually increasing numbers, and all must have his careful and painstaking attention. Yet he was in no sense withdrawn from the main current of campus life, but became more and more a vital part of it. An individualist in his peculiar endowments and main interests, and by his very nature, as well as by the demands of his work, forced to walk a somewhat lonely way, he yet loved congenial companionship and thrived in its atmosphere. Having few very close and intimate friends, he yet felt very close to many.



Not long after his arrival at Tuskegegee there was on the faculty a young woman in whom he became very deeply interested-- and a dream of ultimate companionship began to take form in his mind. But during a conversation in a group one day he heard her give expression to certain ideas and attitudes so completely at variance with his own that there was left of his dream but a rude shock and a wound in his sensitive spirit. He had always felt a deep pride in his own race; this young woman, obviously, did not. There could be no ultimate companionship on such a basic ~~xxxxxxx~~ difference as this. Her death, ~~xxxxxxx~~ within a few years, ~~afterward~~, led him to the conclusion, expressed long afterward, that perhaps it was well that "things had turned out as they did". And he sometimes said, when an intimate friend would ask why he never had married, "I believe in that statement about 'What God hath joined together', and so on. But what God doesn't join had better be left unjoined".

In 1903, when Rockefeller Hall was erected, the gift of John D. Rockefeller and a residence hall for men students, Prof. Carver moved to more comfortable quarters on the first floor there, continuing to get his meals in the School dining hall. Landscape panels in oil appeared on the walls of the corridor leading to his rooms; books lined portions of the walls of his living room; glass cases of collections of stones, micas, etc. stood on the tables; ~~pieces~~ paintings and pieces of handiwork hung on the walls; plants bloomed in the windows-- They were the rooms of an artist, a scientist, a teacher; rooms that gathered unto themselves a great treasure of memories as the procession of years went by.

Students were free to come to him here, or in his office, or on the street, for that matter. "Perhaps the finest thing about his life at Tuskegee is the constant access the students have for personal contact with him," one of them wrote. "When advice is sought by the humblest student there is no 'red tape' to encounter in entering his office, no hesitancy in approaching him on the street once you have met him. One of his characteristic pastimes is teaching the



boys how to train the wrinkles in their foreheads: 'Always lengthwise, never up and down' ". <sup>6</sup>

Upon occasion he could be as gay as the gayest of them, and, knowing they could count on this, his students concocted many and various pranks to play on him. A group of them one day took the body of one bug, the legs of another, the wings of another, a head from yet another, and, pasting them carefully together on cardboard, evolved a very strange-looking new insect, which they took to the next class with them. Just before the recitation began, the most pious-~~looking~~ appearing student in the group came up bearing the new bug, and with seemingly serious concern, asked the Professor if he could identify this new insect they had found. Equally serious, Prof. Carver loomed carefully at the bug, thought over the problem, then turned to the class and said, "Well, this, I thinkk is what we would call a humbug".

These gay pranks, sometimes even instigated by the Professor himself, were likely to break out even in the Sunday evening Bible Class, a volunteer group Withh Carver as teacher that met for years just before the evening chapel service, sometimes with an attendance of 200 or more. Science and the Scriptures, he would often say, agree fundamentally for those who have thorough knowledge of both, but may appear quite contrary to those who are lacking in such knowledge. "Many revelations were made by his detailed explanations and scientific demonstrations." Such a demonstration took place on the night when the lesson concerned the destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, a demonstration which added another incident to the beloved lore of campus life at Tuskegee. The story of the wicked cities had been told, explanations made, discussion, if any, etc. Prof. Carver toyed with certain articles on the table, carrying on a running line of comment the while. "These wicked cities, and what happened to them?" Suddenly fumes and flames and seeming fury rose up in wrath from the table before them, and the youthful Bible students, choking and coughing from the chemical fumes that quickly filled the class room, took precipitate departure.



But never were they likely to forget the lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah !

"He understood boys as few men do", one of his former students said, in later years. And girls, ~~xxx~~ perhaps, as well. There are stories told of the prizes he offered to girls for the most artistic flower arrangements. "His accuracy in everything he did impressed us all as students, especially his accurate observations. More than that, he was like a father to many of us"...thus they were accustomed to speak of him.

Booker T. Washington was by no means unaware of these and other distinctive contributions Prof. Carver was making to the Institute, and gave him constant support and encouragement. Commenting on the man himself and on his work, he declared: "One of the most gifted men of the Negro race whom I have ever happened to meet is George W. Carver.... As a result of his work in breeding cotton and of the bulletins he has prepared on experiments in building up wornout soils, he has become widely known to both colored and white farmers thruout the south. When some years ago the State secretary of Agriculture called a meeting at Montgomery of the leading teachers in the state, Prof. Carver was the only colored man invited to that meeting. He was at that time invited to deliver an address to the convention and for an hour he was questioned on the interesting work he was doing at the Experiment Station.... A few years ago the colonial secretary of the German Empire, accompanied by one of the cotton experts of his dept., traveled thru the south in a private car, paid a visit to Tuskegee largely to study, in connection with the other work of the school, the cotton-growing experiments that Prof. Carver has been carrying on for some years. In his book, 'The Negro in the New World', Sir Harry Johnston...says, 'Prof. Carver, who teaches scientific Agriculture, botany, agricultural chemistry, etc., at Tuskegee, is, as regards complexion and features, an absolute Negro; but in the cut of his clothes, the accent of his speech, the soundness of his Science, he might be prof. of Botany not at Tuskegee, but at Oxford or Cambridge'.



" Altho Prof. Carver impresses everyone who meets him with the extent of his knowledge in the matter of plant life, he is quite the most modest man I have ever met. In fact, he is almost timid. He dresses in the plainest and simplest manner possible; the only thing he allows in the way of decoration is a flower in his button-hole.... He learned from books when he could get them; learned from experience always; and made friends wherever he went." ?

In the midst of his busy life at Tuskegee we find the professor finding time for correspondence with his old friends back in Iowa.... a letter which bears out his Principal's statement concerning the innate modesty of the man, as well as his generous appreciation of the help given him by his friends. To the Milhollands on Oct. 2, 1901, he writes:

" Your esteemed favor of July 23rd reached me a few days ago and I was indeed glad to hear from you.... I think the heat here has been without parallel in the history of the country, altho 104 % is the highest reached here, this of course taken from the Gov't thermometer connected with the weather service.

" I think of you often and shall never forget what you were in my life, how much real help and inspiration you gave me. You, of course, will never know how much you did for a poor colored boy who was drifting here and there as a ship without a rudder. You helped me to start aright, and what the Lord has in his kindness and wisdom permitted me to accomplish is due in very great measure to your real genuine Christian spirits. How I wish the world was full of such people; what a different world it would be.

"Should I ever come so near you again rest assured I am coming to see you, and I plan to come to Iowa during some of my vacations. Our school opens on the 10th of this month. We have already admitted over 1,000 students. I am glad for your words of cheer and good will. These from those we love always make life much easier.

"Must close as I have about 20 letters to answer aside from my other duties



"May God continue to bless and help you..Love to all...Yours very gratefully,

Geo. W. Carver "

In 1906 the 25th Anniversary of the School was celebrated-- another great occasion on the campus. Pres. Eliot of Harvard, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, Bishop Galloway of Miss., Pres. Abercrombie of the University of Alabama; Secretary of War Taft, and other notable figures in American life were present as speakers and guests. Paul Laurence Dunbar, the celebrated Negro poet, contributed the now well-known "Tuskegee Song". Reports presented indicated that now the School was an institution of 156 teachers; 1590 regular students; 83 buildings; 2300 acres of land near Tuskegee; an endowment of \$ 1, 225, 664 in addition to the 22,500 acres of saleable land granted by the U.S. Congress-- and that, indicative of the scale of the school's farming ~~and industrial~~ operations were the facts that 195, 261 pounds of beef and hogs were slaughtered in 1905, and 8,000 bushels of sweet potatoes raised.

Impressive also was the report of Prof. Carver of the work carried on in the Research and Experiment Station during its first ten years of existence. Included were reports on experiments with sweet potatoes; feeding acorns; peas, beans, corn for forage; 13 varieties of cotton; Irish potatoes; onions; vetch and crimson clover; cotton; and peanuts. 7 bulletins and 16 leaflets had been issued; school gardens and distribution of seed samples among farmers carried on; monthly Farmers' Institutes held on the campus, with average attendance of 75; 20 trips made thru the county, reaching 1,000 persons; Annual Farm Fairs held; newspaper articles written and published in county and national papers; bulletins sent to 10 foreign post offices; 115 samples of soil analysed for farmers and written instructions given as to quantity and kinds of fertiliser needed. In out-of-state work, "the Director this year has had 7 calls in Georgia, 1 in Tenn., 1 in Florida". An agricultural wagon was being fitted up in which "lecturers, demonstrations, and exhibits would be carried around". A vivid narrative is this



this report, though told in the brief and terse language of unadorned statistics.

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The agricultural wagon mentioned was an outgrowth of the Annual Negro Farmers' Conference, organized by Dr. Washington in 1892. "To Dr. Washington's surprise this first conference brought 500 farm people to Tuskegee Institute... At this and subsequent conferences, Dr. Washington always conducted the program and discussions in such an informal and simple manner that the farmers were assured of their welcome to the school and readily made to feel that they were an integral part of the meetings. Usually someone was called upon to lead an old time plantation melody. Soon all present joined in, humming, nodding, and softly patting their feet. Many times when the climax of a spiritual was reached, the atmosphere was surcharged with that oneness of spirit which so completely characterizes the Negro rural church gathering. The constraints of fear and self-consciousness were swept away, and kindred souls felt only the stir of emotion which served to open their hearts and minds to the inspiration that was to follow. Dr. Washington, in his tactful way of approaching the most delicate subjects, would launch into his program, calling the attention of the people to the vital facts affecting their lives, without offending or embarrassing them.

"At the fourth annual meeting Dr. Washington definitely outlined the purpose of the conference, in his statement that 'The aim will be, as in the three previous years, to bring together for a quiet conference, not the politicians, but the representatives of the common, hard-working farmers and mechanics--the bone and sinew of the Negro race, and its ministers and teachers. Two objectives will be kept in view. First, to find out from the people, themselves, the facts as to their conditions and to get their ideas as to the remedies for the present evils. Second, to get information as to how the young men and women now being educated can best use their education in helping the masses'. This conference was the forerunner of the many modern farm congresses







"became the vehicle of the first Negro demonstration agent in federal employ, and went forth from Tuskegee on a regular schedule to the surrounding communities"-- and once again Tuskegee Institute, thru its Founder, its Scientist, and its Philanthropist, had made a significant contribution to American education.

In the summer of 1908 Prof. Carver had the pleasure of making a visit to his childhood home at Diamond Grove. In a letter to Dr. Milholland he speaks of this visit:

"I was to my old home in Missouri last summer and a white lady who knew me as a boy was alughing and telling me how I used to doctor her sick plants and how she wondered why everything would grow for me. I have much of that same reputation here..... I always wear a flower in the lapel of my coat and in the hottest weather I can wear a rosebud for two or three days, People often wonder how I can do it. I simply say to them that I love flowers and they respond--- and I really believe they do.....

(More about the Diamond Grove visit here)

By this time the Agricultural Dept. and the Experiment Station had long since out-grown the Armstrong-Slater building. The active supervision of the Agricultural dept. had been placed in the hands of Prof. Geo. R. Bridgeforth, with 18 assistants, in order that Prof. Carver might be free to give his time entirely to the Research and Experiment work, the increasing demands and requests for lectures, demonstrations, research and experiments and reports that came in from an ever-widening area. In 1909 another milestone was set up with the erection of the Milbank Agricultural building, the gift of George Eastman. On the second floor of this four-story, well-equipped building, there were rooms set apart for Prof. Carver: a spacious laboratory which came in time to be known affectionately as "God's Little Work- Shop", and a comfortable office just across the corridor.



Symbolic of the widening horizons of his work, the broadening scope of his service, was this new building to which Prof. Carver now transferred his headquarters.

Tuskegee Institute, along with the rest of America in those days, was swept along on the hurrying tide of Progress, unaware of imminent world catastrophe, or of its own impending grief and loss. The World War-- and the death of Tuskegee's Founder -- had yet to come.

and as the meeting was held  
next day he began to speak  
in the afternoon - and he  
began to speak to the  
audience concerning products which  
was finding which products which  
from products - products which  
he believed would ultimately be  
the widespread commercial value-  
of these products in increasing  
its began to become a people  
beyond the horizon and its  
spread the possibilities -  
undiscovered - of possibilities with  
there were many things with  
Professor Carver - as Tuskegee  
and - etc.



