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Anacostia Community Museum Archives

Douglass' Monthly, April 1861, Vol. III, NO. XI

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APRIL, 1861. DOUGLASS' MONTHLY. 439
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FROM THE PIKE'S PEAK GOLD REGION.
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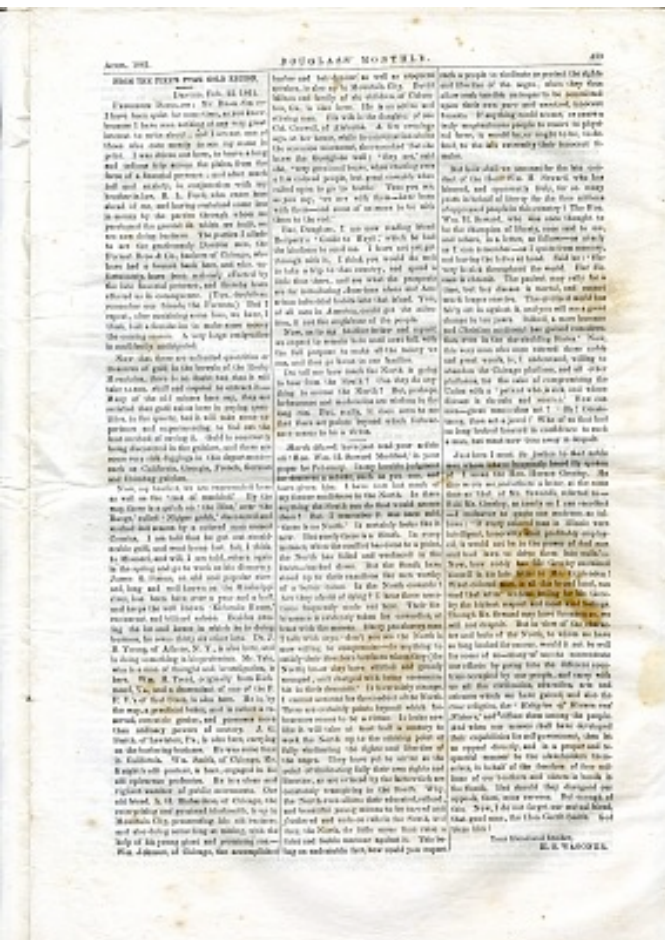
Denver, Feb. 22, 1861.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: MY DEAR SIR:--

I have been quiet for some time, as you know, because I have seen nothing of any very great interest to write about; and I am not one of those who care merely to see my name in print. I was driven out here, to brave a long and tedious trip across the plains, from the force of a financial pressure; and after much toil and anxiety, in conjunction with my brother-in-law, B. L. Ford, who came here ahead of me, and having sustained some loss in money by the parties through whom we purchased the ground on which we built, we are now doing business. The parties I allude to are the gentlemanly Dublin men, the Forrest Bros. & Co., bankers of Chicago, who have had a branch bank here, and who, unfortunately, have been seriously effected by the late financial pressure, and thereby have effected us in consequence. (You, doubtless, remember our friends, the Forrests.) But I repeat, after sustaining some loss, we have, I think, laid a foundation to make some money the coming season. A very large emigration is confidently anticipated.

Now that there are unlimited quantities or treasures of gold in the bowels of the Rocky Mountains, there is no doubt but that it will take LABOR, skill and capital to extract it.-- Many of the old miners here say, they are satisfied that gold exists here in paying quantities, in the quartz, but it will take some experience and experimenting to find out the best method of saving it. Gold is constantly being discovered in the gulches, and there is some very rich diggings in this department-- such as California, Georgia, French, and German and Humbug gulches.

Now, my brother, we are represented here as well as the 'rest of mankind.' By the way, there is a gulch on 'the Blue,' over 'the Range,' called 'Nigger gulch,' discovered and worked last season by a colored man named Cousins. I am told that he got out considerable gold, and went home last fall, I think, to Missouri, and will, I am told, return again in the spring and go to work on his discovery. James G. Simms, and old and popular steward, long and well known on the Mississippi river, has been here over a year and a half, and keeps the well known 'Eldorado House,' restaurant and billiard saloon. Besides owning the lot and house in which he is doing business, he owns thirty six other lots. Dr. J. B. Young, of Athens, N. Y., is also here, and is doing something in his profession. Mr. Tate, who is a man of thought and investigation, is here. Wm. H. Trent, originally from Richmond, Va., and a descendant of one of the F. F. V.'s of that State, is also here. He is, by the way, a practical baker, and is rather a reserved, eccentric genius, and possesses more than ordinary powers of oratory. J. G. Smith, of Lewiston, Pa., is also here, carrying on the barbering business. He was some time in California. Wm. Smith, of Chicago, Mr. Knight's old partner, is here, engaged in his old epicurean profession. He is a close and vigilant watcher of public movements. Our old friend, A.H. Richardson, of



Chicago, the enterprising and go-ahead blacksmith, is up in Mountain City, prosecuting his old business, and also doing something at mining, with the help of his young giant and promising son. -- Wm. Johnson, of Chicago, the accomplished

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barber and hair-dresser, as well as eloquent speaker, is also up in Mountain City. David Milton and family of six children, of Columbus, Ga., is also here. He is an active and stirring man. His wife is the daughter of one Col. Crowell, of Alabama. A few evenings ago, at her house, while in conversation about the secession movement, she remarked that she knew the Georgians well; 'they are,' said she, 'very great and brave, when crowing over a few colored people, but great cowards when called upon to go to battle.' Thus you see, as you say, 'we are with them-- have been with them-- and some of us mean to be with them to the end.'

But, Douglass, I am now reading friend Redpath's Guide to Hayti, which he had the kindness to send me. I have not yet got through with it. I think you would do well to take a trip to that country, and spend a little time there, and see what the prospects are for introducing American ideas and American industrial habits into that island. You, of all men in America, could get the attention, if not the confidence of the people.

Now, as to my brother-in-law and myself, we expect to remain here until next fall, with the full purpose to make all the money we can, and then go home to our families.

Do tell me how much the North is going to bear from the South? Can they do anything to arouse the North? But, perhaps forbearance and moderation are wisdom in the long run. But, really, it does seem to me that there are points beyond which forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

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March 4th.-- I have just read your article on 'Hon. Wm. H. Seward Modified,' in your paper for February. In my humble judgment he deserves a rebuke, such as you can, and have given him. I have now lost much of my former confidence in the North. Is there anything the South can do that would arouse them? But I remember it was once said, 'there is no North.' It certainly looks like it now. But surely there is a South. In every instance, when the conflict has come to a point, the North has failed and weakened in the knees-- backed down. But the South have stood up to their exactions like men worthy of a better cause. Is the North cowards? Are they afraid of dying? I hear these assertions frequently made out here. Their forbearance is evidently taken for cowardice, at least with the masses. Every pro-slavery man I talk with says, 'don't you see the North is now willing to compromise-- do anything to satisfy their Southern brethren whom they (the North) know they have villified and grossly wronged, and charged with being unreasonable in their demands.' It is certainly strange. I cannot account for the conduct of the North. There are certainly points beyond which forbearance ceases to be a virtue. It looks now like it will take at least half a century to work the North up to the sticking point of fully vindicating the rights and liberties of the negro. They have yet to arrive at the point of vindicating fully their own rights and liberties, as are evinced by the facts which are constantly transpiring in the South. Why, the North even allows their educated, refined, and beautiful young women to be tarred and feathered and rode on rails in the South, and they, the North, do little more than raise a

faint and feeble murmur against it. This being an undeniable fact, how could you expect
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such a people to vindicate or protect the rights and liberties of the negro, when they thus allow such terrible outrages to be committed upon their own pure and unmixed, innocent females. If anything could arouse, or cause a truly magnanimous people to resort to physical force, it would be, or ought to be, to defend, to the last extremity their innocent females.

But how shall we account for the late conduct of the Hon. Wm. H. Seward, who has labored, and apparently truly, for so many years in behalf of liberty for the four millions of oppressed people in this country? The Hon. Wm. H. Seward, who was once thought to be the champion of liberty, once said to me and others, in a letter, as follows--as nearly as I can remember--as I quote from memory, not having the letter at hand. Said he: 'Slavery is sick throughout the world. Her disease is chronic. The patient may rally for a time, but her disease is mortal, and cannot much longer survive. The civilized world has fairly set in against it, and you will see a great change in ten years. Indeed, a more humane and Christian sentiment has gained consideration, even in the slaveholding States.' Now, this very who once uttered those noble and great words, is, I understand, willing to abandon the Chicago platform, and all other platforms, for the sake of compromising the Union with a 'patient who is sick, and whose disease is chronic and MORTAL.' How can men--great men--thus act? 'Oh! Consistency, thou art a jewel!' Who of us that had so long looked forward in confidence to such a man, but must now turn away in despair.

Just here I must do justice to that noble man whom I have frequently heard illy spoken of. I mean the Hon. Horace Greeley. He also wrote me and others a letter, at the same time as that of Mr. Seward's, referred to-- Said Mr. Greeley, as nearly as I can recollect-- I endeavor to quote one sentence, as follows: 'If every colored man in Illinois were intelligent, honorably and profitably employed, it would not be in the power of bad men and bad laws to drive them into exile.'-- Now, how nobly has Mr. Greeley sustained himself in his late letter to Mr. Crittenden! What colored man, in all this broad land, can read that letter without feeling for Mr. Greeley the highest respect and most kind feelings. Though Mr. Seward may have forsaken us, we will not despair. But in view of the character and facts of the North, to whom we have so long looked for succor, would it not be well for some of us-- many of us-- to concentrate our efforts by going into the different countries occupied by our people, and carry with us all the civilization, education, arts and sciences which we have gained, and also the true religion, the 'Religion of Reason and Nature,' and diffuse them among the people. And when our masses shall have developed their capabilities for self-government, then let us appeal directly, and in a proper and respectful manner to the slaveholders themselves, in behalf of the freedom of four millions of our brothers and sisters in bonds in the South. But should they disregard our appeals, then, nous verrons. But enough of this. Now, I do not forget our mutual friend, that good man, the Hon. Gerrit Smith. God bless him!

Your friend and brother,
H.O. WAGONER.
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