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Up From Slavery

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FAILING PRIZE ORATION

Far to the South, beyond an ever vanishing line, lies one of the fairest domains of this fair land. Mountains clothed in the forest primeval hide away treasures yet undreamed; rivers, tumbling or loitering, winding or widening, glide home to the sea. By night the cotton whitens beneath the stars, the clover tosses its fragrance to the breeze, and the tobacco catches the faint aroma of the winds.

Here a dark race, the curse of Canaan on its brow and on its back the weight of ages darker than its face, tends the cotton and hoes the corn.

Too well you know the story. The Iliad of our woes began when negroes were first brought to the colony of Virginia and sold as slaves. But the trade was not confined to the South; when our independence was won all the colonies held slaves and it was only by the operation of social and economic laws that slavery disappeared from the North and assumed that sectional character which made the "Old South" distinguished for a civilization of its own. But that civilization was destined to perish in the blood of its citizens who fought and died to save it. Whether the northern soldier fought to free the slave or to preserve the Union it matters not now; the slave was free and every man,