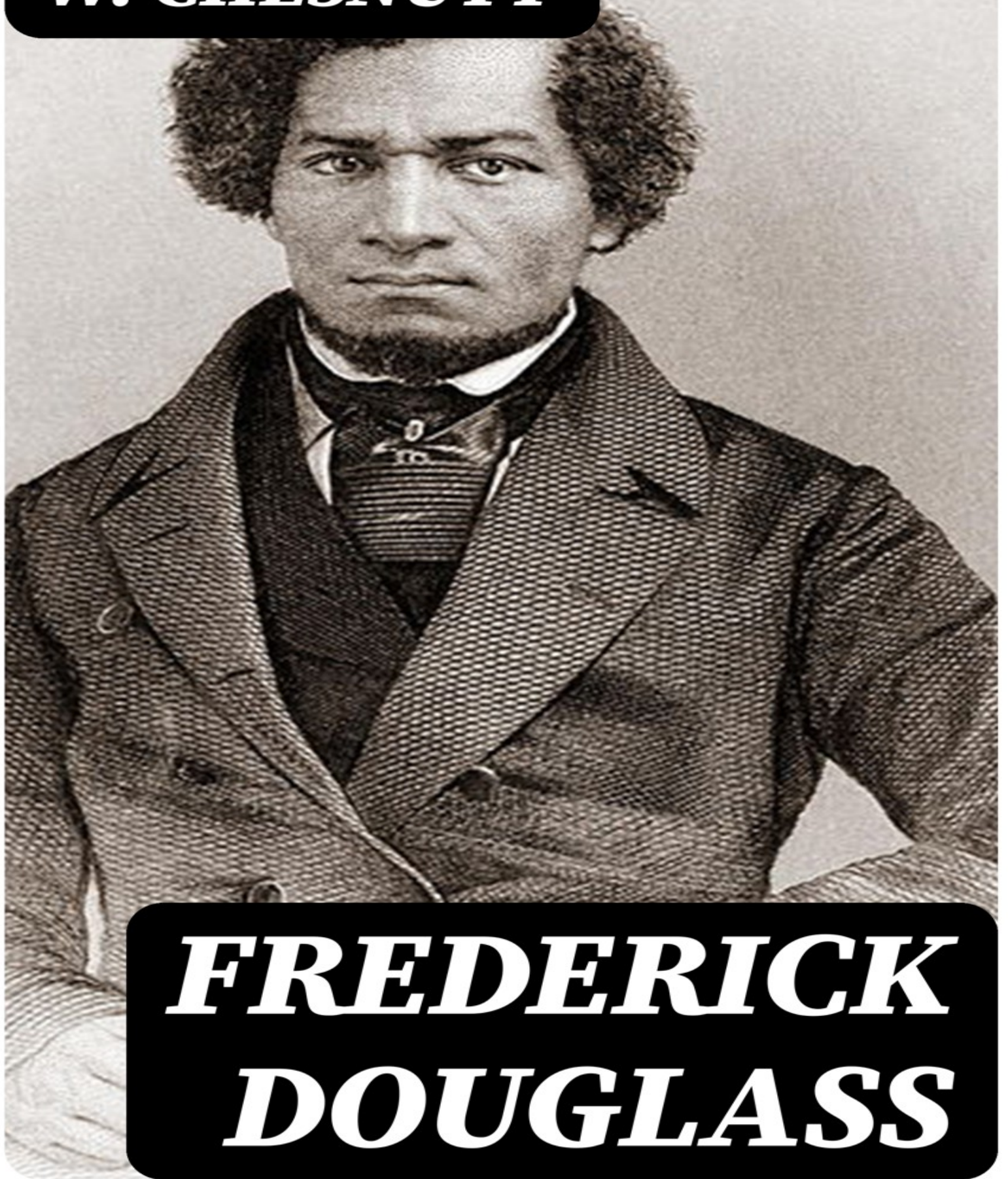


***CHARLES
W. CHESNUTT***



***FREDERICK
DOUGLASS***

Charles W. Chesnutt

Frederick Douglass

A Biography

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The Beacon biographies of eminent Americans. Includes bibliographical references (p.).

Preface

Frederick Douglass lived so long, and played so conspicuous a part on the world's stage, that it would be impossible, in a work of the size of this, to do more than touch upon the salient features of his career, to suggest the respects in which he influenced the course of events in his lifetime, and to epitomize for the readers of another generation the judgment of his contemporaries as to his genius and his character.

Douglass's fame as an orator has long been secure. His position as the champion of an oppressed race, and at the same time an example of its possibilities, was, in his own generation, as picturesque as it was unique; and his life may serve for all time as an incentive to aspiring souls who would fight the battles and win the love of mankind. The average American of to-day who sees, when his attention is called to it, and deplores, if he be a thoughtful and just man, the deep undertow of race prejudice that retards the progress of the colored people of our own generation, cannot, except by reading the painful records of the past, conceive of the mental and spiritual darkness to which slavery, as the inexorable condition of its existence, condemned its victims and, in a less measure, their oppressors, or of the blank wall of proscription and scorn by which free people of color were shut up in a moral and social Ghetto, the gates of which have yet not been entirely torn down.

From this night of slavery Douglass emerged, passed through the limbo of prejudice which he encountered as a freeman, and took his place in history. "As few of the world's great men have ever had so checkered and diversified a career," says Henry Wilson, "so it may at least be plausibly claimed that no man represents in himself more conflicting ideas and interests. His life is, in itself, an epic which finds few to equal it in the realms of either romance or reality." It was, after all, no misfortune for humanity that Frederick Douglass felt the iron hand of slavery; for his genius changed the drawbacks of color and condition into levers by which he raised himself and his people.

The materials for this work have been near at hand, though there is a vast amount of which lack of space must prevent the use. Acknowledgment is here made to members of the Douglass family for aid in securing the photograph from which the frontispiece is reproduced.

The more the writer has studied the records of Douglass's life, the more it has appealed to his imagination and his heart. He can claim no special qualification for this task, unless perhaps it be a profound and in some degree a personal sympathy with every step of Douglass's upward career. Belonging to a later generation, he was only privileged to see the man and hear the orator after his life-work was substantially completed, but often enough then to appreciate something of the strength and eloquence by which he impressed his contemporaries. If by this brief sketch the writer can revive among the readers of another generation a tithe of the interest that Douglass created for

himself when he led the forlorn hope of his race for freedom and opportunity, his labor will be amply repaid.

Charles W. Chesnutt

Cleveland, October, 1899

CHRONOLOGY

1817

Frederick Douglass was born at Tuckahoe, near Easton, Talbot County, Maryland.

1825

Was sent to Baltimore to live with a relative of his master.

1833

March. Was taken to St. Michaels, Maryland, to live again with his master.

1834

January. Was sent to live with Edward Covey, slave-breaker, with whom he spent the year.

1835-36

Hired to William Freeland. Made an unsuccessful attempt to escape from slavery, Was sent to Baltimore to learn the ship-calkers trade.

1838

May. Hired his own time and worked at his trade.

September 3. Escaped from slavery and went to New York City. Married Miss Anna Murray. Went to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Assumed the name of "Douglass."

1841

Attended anti-slavery convention at New Bedford and addressed the meeting. Was employed as agent of the

Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society.

1842

Took part in Rhode Island campaign against the Dorr constitution.

Lectured on slavery. Moved to Lynn, Massachusetts.

1843

Took part in the famous "One Hundred Conventions" of the New England Anti-slavery Society.

1844

Lectured with Pillsbury, Foster, and others.

1845

Published *Frederick Douglass's Narrative*.

1845-46

Visited Great Britain and Ireland. Remained in Europe two years, lecturing on slavery and other subjects. Was presented by English friends with money to purchase his freedom and to establish a newspaper.

1847

Returned to the United States. Moved with his family to Rochester, New York. Established the *North Star*, subsequently renamed *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. Visited John Brown at Springfield, Massachusetts.

1848

Lectured on slavery and woman suffrage.

1849

Edited newspaper. Lectured against slavery. Assisted the escape of fugitive slaves.

1850

May 7. Attended meeting of Anti-slavery Society at New York City. Running debate with Captain Rynders.

1852

Supported the Free Soil party. Elected delegate from Rochester to Free Soil convention at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Supported John P. Hale for the Presidency.

1853

Visited Harriet Beecher Stowe at Andover, Massachusetts, with reference to industrial school for colored youth.

1854

Opposed repeal of Missouri Compromise.

June 12. Delivered commencement address at Western Reserve College, Hudson, Ohio.

1855

Published *My Bondage and My Freedom*. *March.* Addressed the New York legislature.

1856

Supported Fremont, candidate of the Republican party.

1858

Established *Douglass's Monthly*. Entertained John Brown at Rochester.

1859

August 20. Visited John Brown at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

May 12 [October]. Went to Canada to avoid arrest for alleged complicity in the John Brown raid.

November 12. Sailed from Quebec for England.