

SEPTEMBER · 1912

From Charles Sanderson Medbury¹

Des Moines, Iowa, September 3, 1912

My dear Dr. Washington: I am a stranger to you though I have met you personally in several public assemblies and have even had the opportunity of introducing you a time or two in gatherings honored by your presence and address.

I need not at this time speak of my profound interest not only in you personally but in the wonderful contribution of your life. For years your word and work have been an inspiration to me and in sixteen years of student pastoral relationships I have referred to you almost countless times as an inspiration to the young. I am deeply appreciative, too, of the worth of your race and have studied its problems to some extent. I am in close touch with certain of the school life among the negro people in the South having particular acquaintance with Pres. J. B. Lehman of the School at Edwards, Mississippi, for which institution I delivered the Commencement Address some three years ago. I am stating all this that you may know something of my spirit in relation to you personally and something of my interest in the great problems with which you yourself have had so much to do.

My writing you today is the outgrowth of an experience a few days ago at Oskaloosa, Iowa, where I was booked for a series of addresses in the month that I give each year to the Chautauqua work. During my presence in Oskaloosa Senator Vardaman came to the community and delivered his address on "The Impending Crisis." Without doubt you are familiar with this address and know of its wholly inadequate grasp of the problem with which the Senator deals and of its great injustice to the negro people. The day following Senator Vardaman I gave my own time very largely to a reply to his address and there was a tense interest on the part of the people. I hope sincerely that the result was for good.

But Dr. Washington, there are one or two points in which you can be of very great service to me. I am here in a college community, being Chaplain of Drake University with its enrollment of nearly two thousand students. I am *constantly* speaking in Commencements and from the platform in other phases of work and I am tremendously interested in "the race problem" as it is termed. May I ask you, therefore, to put me in touch with literature that will in the first place