

DECEMBER · 1891

A Speech at Old South Meeting House, Boston¹

Boston Dec. 15 '91

To a young man just emerging from slavery with all its demoralizing environments, and entering into the pure, strong, active and unselfish influence of General Armstrong's personality as it was my privilege, with hundreds of others, to do, there came as if by miracle all at once, a new meaning to the possibilities and the object of life, that is hard for most in this audience to understand or appreciate. So, aside from our sense of obligation to General Armstrong for his long years of work for our race, there is a deep and tender love in our hearts for the man himself; a nearness to him, and confidence in him that makes those of us who have been his students not only love but worship him. While at work in the far South for the elevation of our race, when we have grown discouraged at the many difficulties by which we were surrounded, it has been the mental picture of Gen. Armstrong, who knew no discouragement, that has given us strength to go on and conquer. When we have grown selfish and disposed to live for ourselves, the vision of General Armstrong, who never seemed to know aught but to live and do for others, has come and made us ashamed of our selfishness, and when we have been inclined to grow indifferent and inactive, the form of General Armstrong who never seemed to rest night or day, winter or summer, has come before us and given new zeal and new activity.

It has been my privilege while a student at Hampton, as well as in later life, to see something of the way in which General Armstrong has actually worn away his life, not in his cause nor Hampton's cause but for the Nation's cause — *your cause*. If time permitted I could tell you how in the early days of Hampton when the Institution was sorely pressed for means I have seen him arrive at home at 4 o'clock in the morning from a long Northern tour, begging for funds, speaking at meetings night after night, and filling his days with going from door to door, from office to office. And how, without even going to his room, I have seen him go to his office and plunge into his work of the day while students and teachers were yet in bed.

Future years will show more clearly than these the value of General Armstrong's work. His central idea has been from the first that the salvation of the negro and of the South was in industrial development