

George Washington Carver is leaning over to read what is inscribed on the stone in front of him.

"He could have added fortune to fame but caring for neither, he found happiness and honour in being helpful to the world." Well, I suppose as tomb stones go, a person could have worse said about them. At the end, the only question worth asking about a person is 'Did they do any good?' and I guess they think I did...Sorry, did I say, this one is mine.

Now, it strikes me as a pity, whenever there is a monument to anyone, it always shows their face and not their hands. After all it's the hands that do the work and God never made finer tools than these hands of ours. I wouldn't call mine pretty, but they certainly loved to work and not just on the land! When I first went to college, that's what they set me on; painting and playing piano, it was that sort of place and I was glad just to be there. The art came easy, that's what I always did; draw the plants and flowers around the home place. When they said: "What in the world does that boy do with his time?" I had a stack of paper to answer with. Of course, later I moved on to where I could really study the soil and how to capture its goodness.

I fought for my education too and I earned every cent to pay for it, working whatever jobs I could get, farm hand, cook, I would do it. But, there was one thing that I learned for free, something that anyone who has ever known poverty, real empty-belly, 'dust again for dinner' poverty knows, and that it how to make a lot out of a little. That's what I wanted the black farmers, no, *all* farmers scraping a living in the south to realise; there are ways of getting more from the land. When I wrote my ideas in 'Help for Hard Times', many people questioned who would listen to the son of a slave, and a slave himself?

But wasn't everyone a slave in the south, a slave to 'Master Cotton'? And that master wore out the land, just as bad as it wore out the people who grew it. What I wanted was a way to freedom, a way for people to earn a living from the land without bleeding it so dry that in the end it could give

no more. Cotton takes out all the goodness, but other crops filled with nitrogen put the goodness back, crops like peanuts and sweet potatoes. So, I loaded up my wagon and I travelled around to tell people how to rotate the cropping to keep the land from being sucked dry.

Well, they did as I told them, and I can't say I blame them for getting a little agitated at the stockpiles of peanuts that they couldn't eat or sell! So, it was time to think deeper still and find other ways to use up the crop. And I always said; if you love a thing, it will give up its secrets to you and that is so. Nature told me some of her secrets in the laboratory and others she whispered in the fields and by the end we had around three hundred products and uses derived from the peanut. I do hope you can taste my hard work in your peanut butter, but there were also oils, ink, cosmetics, glue...nothing wasted. The earth wasn't made with garbage dumps, nature has a use for everything, it's people who waste. There were also one hundred uses found for the sweet potato and seventy-five for the pecan nut. There it is, what science can give us are practical ways to discover what nature can do for us. Can you use it, could somebody else use it? Can it make life better and more decent? It was pointed out to me on more than one occasion, that I could have become a rich man from all of my discoveries. But God gave me those things, how can I charge others for them? Besides, if you make money your master, you'll spend your life as a slave.

I realise that there were those who said that I should have used my position and my reputation to speak up louder and more fully about the situation of black people. What I know, what I believe is that education and a decent living is the best way to improve the lot of our people. Education is the key to the golden door of freedom. What I have striven to do is find practical ways to help a man to feed his family, without that, without knowing you won't go hungry tomorrow, there can be no hope.

Yes, as tomb stones go, if one must have one, I'll settle for this.