REPORT
Of the Committee on Mechanical Branches among the Colored People of the Free States.

The development of the physical energies of man, and their control for the weal of society, is one of the prime subjects of political economy. That which God once made in his own image is among the last in the order of creation. The formation of physical proportions come first, then the removal of the darkness which surrounds the practical workings of our physical creations, until there is light, and into that which is formed as the result of first beginnings, shall be breathed the life of superior intelligence. It is the nature of man to follow the order of creation. The physical world in its beautifully enchanting proportions are first spread out before him—he looks, admires, and then tries to imitate. This practice brings the power of thinking into active exercise, and impresses a steady but sure conviction of the necessity of mental culture. The rude tenements brought into existence by physical necessity, are rebuilt and improved upon as time, thought, and culture suggest.

The learning of the world has never been able to keep pace with the development and enlargement of physical power. The mass in the early ages of the world saw the most beautiful arches, dwellings and temples, while the knowledge of letters even was confined to the few.

The wealth of nations commences not in learning, but in physical energies. Learning comes as a necessity of growth. The thinking minds and the energetic wills have been the rulers of the earth; the masses have toiled under the servitude of their control and direction. The spirit of freedom, however, has overcome enslavement by the few, freedom has led to more general education, and hence there is more general intelligence as the result of freedom among the masses. A knowledge of the requirements of freedom, then, in developing the physical powers, must be a part of the foundation of modern civilized society. No people may expect to escape the performance of the duties thus imposed with impunity. It is a law which must be obeyed, or the penalties of its violotions suffered. There need be no cavil as to where society is to begin. The Builder of the Universe has settled that by the necessity which he has thrown around the superstructure of human progress. There must be a basis; Learning is a part of society—it must enter into the composition of society; but the masses cannot be deeply learned, in fact only partially developed. Common School education is all that even the most enlightened countries afford the masses. These are foundation facts with all peoples, so must it be with the colored people of these United States. We must begin with the tillage of the earth and the practice of the mechanical branches, with whatever learning we may have, or the best we can now get.

The observations above presented are a natural result growing out of the investigations of your Committee on Mechanical Branches among the colored people. An examination of the meagre facts which your Committee have gathered shows that while some have realized the true nature of the necessities of our position, others have wholly neglected the means first to be used, or have been driven by public prejudice and the force of circumstances, into modes of living entirely inconsistent with the principles of human progression, viz: non-productive labor.

Your Committee beg leave further to state, that having been appointed by the National Council which assembled in the City of New York, May last, to report to the National Convention to assemble in the City of Philadelphia, October 16, 1855, and accepting the appointment, availed itself of the facility of addressing circular letters to such gentlemen, as we thought would aid us in collecting such information as might be used to advantage by the Convention, and to some extent reliable for reference as to the actual state of Mechanical existence of our people; believing in the idea of producing facts rather than sophistical coloring.

The circular was responded to in a satisfactory manner by many to whom it was addressed, and your Committee feel under many obligations for assistance and suggestions from Mr. Nell, of Boston; Mr. Johnson, of New Bedford, Mass.; Peck, of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Bowers, of Philadelphia; Woodson, of Pittsburgh, Pa.

And we thank the "Herald of Freedom," edited by Mr. Peter H. Clark, of Cincinnati, Ohio, for the very liberal course pursued in endeavoring to give us facts.

Living in the midst of progressive civilization as we do, the statistics show that we are not mixing sufficiently in the el-