What are we, as a people, in the State? What is our condition? What is the character we have?—what the reputation we sustain? We are native-born citizens of the State—immediate descendants of men, held, not long since, as slaves: From this state we were translated into the partial enjoyment and limited possession of freedom. Cut off from the sympathies of our fellow citizens, almost abject in poverty, allowed in many places but a scanty and inadequate participation in the privileges of education, and deprived almost entirely of the elective franchise, we have nevertheless, by the practical operation of common sense, by habits of industry, and the cultivation of the religious sentiments, been enabled to elevate ourselves above abasement, and possess ourselves of many of the advantages of religion, intelligence, and property.

We present the curious and acknowledged creditable spectacle of a people, bending under the weight of proscription, who yet will not suffer by a comparison with their more privileged fellow citizens of the same rank, in either religion, virtue, or industry.

Although from the arbitrary distinctions that prevail throughout the community, we have been debarred entirely from collegiate education; although, to a considerable extent, we have been excluded from the advantages of the Common School System; yet we have been enabled, not only to sustain them among ourselves, but likewise in many instances, select schools of our own. A spirit of intelligence pervades our entire people. Keeping pace with the progressive spirit of the age, and the continual intellectual progress of the nation, there are but few families in which books are not a common and necessary commodity.

In all parts of the State, from Montauk to Buffalo, literary and debating societies and clubs exist among our people, in city, town, and village. In some instances, these societies are adorned and made more useful by libraries and reading rooms. Our schools and associations are continually sending forth a host of youth, with strong determination and purpose, of subserving the best and highest interests of their proscribed race. And not an inconsiderable number of the rising hope of our people, have sought, in some of the higher institutions of learning, either in this or a foreign land, the privileges of a classical education.

We have scattered, as bright spots all along the State, a number of young men, aspirants for the ministry, preparing for academical instruction; or entering, once in a while, the medical profession; with cultivated minds and hearts devoted to the interests of man, and the great purposes of Truth. The causes that have thrown a damp upon our literary arts, have operated disadvantageously in our ecclesiastical relations. The prejudice against us in the community, has been more potent than the dictates of Christian equality. Not only are we debarred from the rightful exercise of ecclesiastical privileges, but we also meet with hindrances and indignities in the sim-