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TO THE DAWN OF TOMORROW READERS

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No Greener Pastures

(From The Reader's Digest)

He has been called — this man whose parents were Negro slaves — "the first and greatest chemurgist." (Chemurgy is that branch of chemistry devoted to the utilization of raw materials, especially farm products, for industrial purposes.) Million-dollar businesses have been built all or in part from his discoveries — largest among them being a \$200,000,000-a-year peanut industry. His crop-pioneering puts many millions every year into the pockets of southern farmers.

He has been showered with honors. Thomas Edison invited him to join his staff at \$50,000 a year. Henry Ford has given him a laboratory for war-time food research. Last June The Progressive Farmer gave him its annual award for "outstanding service to southern agriculture." The Theodore Roosevelt Medal came to him in 1939 as "a liberator to men of the white race as well as the black."

"What other man of our times," asked the New York Times, "has done so much for agriculture in the South?" The world that thus seeks out Dr. George Washington Carver still finds him in the scientific parish where he has worked for 46 years: Macon County, Alabama, and the campus of Tuskegee Institute, famed Negro school.

It is his own philosophy that keeps him there: his belief that there are no greener pastures than those nearby. Science-wise he has reduced that belief to a formula: "Start where you are, with what you have, make something of it, never be satisfied." Now, approaching 80, he is still making that formula work.

He took me recently through the George Washington Carver Museum at Tuskegee — built from his savings to house the results of his nearby explorations and discoveries. He still wears the familiar battered cap and the frayed gray sweater. His voice is frail and his shoulders stooped. But there are no signs of frailty in his mind and spirit.

In a small field behind the museum he pointed out half a hundred strips of pine board, exposed to the sun. They were freshly painted: bright blues, yellows, reds, greens.

"The reason farmers down here do not paint their homes," he said, "isn't because they are lazy or don't care. It is because they don't have cash money to buy paint: The paint that's weathering on these boards costs next to nothing. The color comes from the clays right here in Macon County. The base is used motor oil."

This home-grown paint, made and proved by Dr. Carver at Tuskegee, is now being used by the Tennessee Valley Authority in a demonstration of rural home beautification in 14 TVA localities.

Dr. Carver was the first and still is the greatest exponent of the use of the South's idle lands and waste products

to balance the southern farm diet. This required more than agricultural knowledge, so he learned to be an expert dietitian and cook. His 43 Ways to Save the Wild Plum Crop is a collection of Carver-proved recipes: marmalade, syrup, vinegar, soup, croquettes.

His famous experiments with the peanut led to the production of more than 300 useful articles. Among those now being commercially manufactured are his peanut butter and peanut flour, besides various oils and fertilizer. Widely used is a pamphlet for the farmer's wife: 105 Different Ways to Prepare the Peanut for the Table, including recipes for peanut soup, bread, patties, piecrust, doughnuts, cheese. With such wider use the peanut crop increased from 700 million pounds in 1921 to 1400 million in 1941.

Last March Dr. Carver published his own Victory Garden bulletin: Nature's Garden for Victory and Peace. Its frontispiece quotes from Genesis: "Behold I have given you every herb . . . to you it shall be for meat." Inside is a list of more than 100 grasses, weeds and wild flowers which can be used for food and recipes showing how to use them. They include chicory coffee — "some prefer it to real coffee" — pie "similar to apple or rhubarb" from sour grass; "asparagus tips" from the stalks of silkweed; wild clover "for delicate and fancy salads"; grass-salad sandwiches which have a considerable vogue on the Tuskegee campus.

Born in Missouri around 1864, Dr. Carver never knew his father and mother — they were carried off by slave raiders when he was a baby. A white planter, Moses Carver, raised the child, gave him his name, and because of the boy's poor health let him do women's work: cooking, sewing, laundering.

But a strange fire burned in him. The only book he remembers in the Carver home was Webster's Speller. He memorized it. Having fallen on hard times themselves, the Carvers were unable to send him to school. He went on his own; slept in barns and haylofts; worked for his food at whatever jobs turned up; took in all the learning that the one-room school-house had to offer. "White folks' washing" paid his way through high school.

He was admitted by mail to the University of Iowa, only to be rejected, when he arrived, because he was a Negro. Whereupon he opened a small laundry and at the end of a year had accumulated funds enough to obtain entrance to Simpson College at Indianola, Iowa. He washed, scrubbed and house-cleaned his way through three years at that school and went on to finish four years of agricultural studies at Iowa State College. There his genius with soils and plants won him, on graduation, a place on the faculty.

Down in central Alabama, at about this time, Booker T. Washington — founder and president of Tuskegee Institute — was dreaming of economic emancipation for the Negro farmer. The dreams needed a man. Washington chose young Carver.

When Carver arrived in Tuskegee, in 1886, there seemed to be little for him to work on and nothing to work with.

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