

II

ALAIN LeROY LOCKE.

Had it been known that Alain LeRoy Locke was a candidate for the Cecil Rhodes Oxford Scholarship, whatever of surprise there might have come in the result of such examination, to those who knew him, it would only have come through a knowledge of failure. The fact of his candidacy came with the newspaper accounts of the decision of the examining board. Scores of persons scarcely knew of the existence of this young man; but there were some who had followed his fortunes through a long line of triumphs, through personal interest, from the kindergarten up; who would have discounted the climax without the least fear of its being misplaced. Human kind delights in results, but is equally delighted at antecedents. We all want to know of momentum and processes, and now that young Locke is an international figure, anterior considerations share the fact of the moment. The editorials in the Philadelphia Press and Inquirer laid great stress on a well equipped ancestry, for three generations. That was on the paternal side. The maternal line takes us back to Charles Shorter, a freeman born about 1790, and an enlisted soldier in the war of 1812. His wife (born Daffin) was also free born. They both possessed schooling equal to the best of their kind nearly one hundred years ago. This advantage was improved upon

in his grandparents with an advanced stride on the part of his mother, born Mary J. Hawkins, who was a graduate of the Institute for Colored Youth, in the class of 1869, and whose career as a teacher has continued until now, with but few interruptions, with fine success all the way through.

The military spirit in his family seemed to be in the maternal line, because his great uncle, Thomas Hawkins, won Congressional thanks, as well as a governmental medal for unusual bravery during the Civil War. His grandfather, Ishmael Locke, was born a freeman in Salem, New Jersey, in 1820, and died in 1852. He attended the public schools of his native place, and was soon noted for his ability and studious habits. This resulted in a continued course, privately, under tutors, when he made great advancement and became a well equipped man. He taught school in Salem, N. J., and was sent to Africa by a Society of Friends, to establish schools and to do missionary work. Four years were spent there, and he married a daughter of Kentucky parents, who had preceded him on a similar mission. On his way to Africa he spent a season in England and matriculated as a student at Cambridge University in a special course of lectures. Returning to the United States he was made master of a public school at Providence, Rhode Island. Later on he taught in Camden, N. J., located at Fifth and Cherry streets. When the Institute for Colored youth began its orderly career Ishmael Locke was elected as its head. It was through Marmaduke Cope, Philadelphia's great merchant and ship owner, that he was so placed. Mr. Cope knew of the qualifications of Ishmael

Locke through direct personal knowledge with men in Salem, N. J., and Providence, R. I. These were school officials and thoroughly able to judge. Some of his endorsers are worthy of mention, and among them: T. Ellwood Chapman, Edward Needles, Caleb Clothier, Casper Wister, R. P. Thompson, Attorney General of New Jersey, Alexander G. Cattell, later on United States Senator from New Jersey, Rev. William B. Otis, rector of St. John's Protestant Episcopal church, Salem, N. J., of which Ishmael Locke was a communicant member, and many others. This was as far back as 1844, and to merit such high endorsement from men not given to signing their names without full knowledge proves the sterling qualities of the man.

The sequence is in the father, Pliny I. Locke, a native of this city and a man who displayed great mind strength, all through his school life which was had here at his home. He graduated from the Institute for Colored Youth in 1867, under Prof. E. D. Bassett, and in all lines of study outranked his colleagues. He was a fine mathematician, and the influence of his methods as a teacher lasts till now. Through Marmaduke Cope, the friend of his father, he taught in the school where his father was the first head and where he had been a scholar. Later on he entered the government service in Washington, D. C., and held the highest grade clerkship. While there he finished the law course at Howard University; later on returning to his home in this city, he received a clerkship in the post-office, and afterwards an inspector of meters in the gas department. The evolution thus outlined from

both the paternal and maternal lines, brings us to the main object—Alain LeRoy Locke.

He was born in Philadelphia in 1885, and being an only child, with both parents experienced teachers and thoroughly familiar with child nature, his training began in his own home with an orderliness out of the common. All of his play was arranged with the added view of study. Not that he was hampered, but there was intelligent direction in the relief moments of his tasks. He could romp, be noisy, and did all that boys of his age usually did. His parents knew his aptitude at assimilation and digestion, and in every way furthered it. The death of his father left him under the sole care of a mother, and her share in shaping his after successes has been as sane as unremittent. When Miss Florence A. Lewis (now Mrs. Charles E. Bentley) was educational editor of the *Philadelphia Press*, she said of him: "In one of the divisions of the tenth grade the smallest and youngest boy, LeRoy Locke, is said to be doing the most satisfactory work, and is leading his class. Locke is doing especially good work in mathematics." This was the estimate of his teachers and the opinion, from observation, of the writer, who had herself been a teacher. It must be remembered that the boy Locke was even then a great deal younger than his classmates. The average age of our High School graduates is nineteen. Locke entered No. 1, and finished the course No. 1 at sixteen. From there to the School of Pedagogy, leading all the way through and ahead of all at the end. The same thing has obtained at Harvard University, from which he has just been graduated,

winning all the honors through the various terms. The fact must be noted, that he has achieved all this in three years, instead of the usual four. He entered the examination for the Cecil Rhodes Oxford scholarship and was one of five out of fifty, the other from Pennsylvania being a Jew. If stolidity, endeavor and brain power count, no one knowing the subject of this chronicle will have the slightest apprehension as to a repetition of past triumphs during the three years' course he is to take at Oxford University.

There is an old story about John C. Calhoun's having said: "If you show me a Negro able to comprehend Greek, in the least, I will acknowledge my mistake in all previous estimates as to brain power." Just after that James McCune Smith, of New York, graduated at Edinburg University, Scotland; Jonathan C. Gibbs, of Philadelphia, a few years later from Dartmouth, and ten years after that, Jesse E. Glasgow, of this city, had nearly finished a brilliant course at Glasgow University, when cut off by death.

The Rhodes bequest knows nothing of race, color or nationality. This benefactor knew the importance of character, and in the conclusions of the Board of Managers that counted with Locke, along with his pure ability. As the Boost Book Magazine said: "There were five men to take the last examination. Four of these were white. The black won out. It was decided that he was not only the most learned student, but that he possessed the qualification of manliness and the further asset of popularity. * * * * * There is a tremendous significance in this thing. * * * * *

The black man had to fight an uphill fight." Lock's "modesty is a candle to his merit," and public notoriety is far from his taste. The narrator of this cursory glance at Locke and his forbears has done it despite the fact of his dislike for the limelight. He is thoroughly conscientious and works hard, not only from a sense of duty, but because study is his passion. In what he has achieved a race has been uplifted. His aversion to publicity stays the pen. This much millions feel a proprietorship in, and it is for this reason that the writer has especially aimed to picture the loins from which Alain LeRoy Locke sprung.

Just one month ago, Alain LeRoy Locke added to his great triumph in March, by winning the Bowdoin Prize at Harvard. Even without securing the Rhodes Oxford scholarship, this would have been a rare achievement. The bestowal is the highest within the gift of Harvard, and but seldom granted. Among previous holders, were Longfellow and Lowell. It carries with it, a medal, a public presentation of a thesis, and two hundred and fifty dollars in money, and is given for literary work. Most men consider themselves fortunate to even graduate in the specified four years, and here is a very young man, who lops off one year, and gathers in every honor obtainable. This last act accents many other strong ones, and presages, not only victories at Oxford, but after results of vast good, not only to himself, but to his kind, and the world generally. Our subject is a live refutation of mental inferiority on the part of the Negro.

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