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Howard University Journal

A WEEKLY PAPER PUBLISHED BY THE STUDENTS OF HOWARD UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Volume VIII

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Number 19

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AN UNDEVELOPED MUSICAL GENIUS

Miss Perle Alexander

FROM among all the new singers who come to Howard University, it is invariably the rule that each year one stands forth head and shoulders above all the rest to ask the stamp of approval from our student audience and a cold, critical, Washington public. The situation this year is more interesting, perhaps, than ever before. But it is not too much to say that of all the singers now at Howard or of all those who have come here during my stay—truly a worthy group—Miss Perle Alexander is the most interesting, and the one singer whose future seems to hold the most brilliant promise. Perhaps, because she was introduced to us without any loud preliminary flourish of trumpets, we have not awakened to the fact that we have an undeveloped musical genius in our midst, or peradventure, we have not reached the point where we can form our own judgments, but are waiting for some musical critic to do for her what William D. Howell did for our famous poet, the late Paul L. Dunbar, before we can proclaim her great.

Miss Alexander possesses in a great measure those requisites necessary for a career on the lyric stage—a pure, clear, mellow, velvety voice of peculiar quality found only in the Negro voice, and which seldom fails to echo a

ander, who is just about to enter upon a successful preparation for the operatic stage, to the front rank of grand opera prima donnas.

A mulatto a little above the average height, with a full, symmetrical figure, Miss Alexander makes a better appearance off the stage than on. One can admire the beauty of her large, soft, expressive, brown eyes, her exquisitely curved mouth, the rounded oval of her face, the clear, brown complexion where a faint color comes and goes, and the rapid change of expression which passes over her mobile countenance. Her black hair is worn in the fashionable coiffure of the latest Grecian style of hair dressing.

Miss Alexander comes from a musical family, her grandmother and mother and father, although never professionals, had fine voices which were cultivated to a certain extent. She never possessed a typical child voice. At the early age of

nine people at her home town in Little Rock, Ark., began to marvel at the natural beauty and the sweetness of her voice. When her parents moved to St. Louis, Missouri; and she arrived at the age of thirteen, she sang like a woman with emotionalism and sentiment. Here again the peo-



MISS PERLE ALEXANDER

response in the human heart, artistic temperament, superb health, a rare intelligence, a love for her art, a determination to succeed, capacity for learning, common-sense, and a charming personality. This combination of qualities is extraordinary and such that will bring Miss Alex-

ple were struck with admiration at her wonderful gift, and from time to time she received offers to go on the stage as prima donna for Williams and Walker's Bandana Land Company and other shows. Ernest Hogan offered to star her in his new show, which was cut short by his untimely death.

Her voice is clear, pure, rich, sonorous, and famous for the following qualities; height, brilliancy and agility. At present it is most remarkable in the upper register, its height is surprising and it grows in volume instead of getting smaller. In the lower register, this voice can only be compared to the violoncello, the tones of the middle register are true, rich, vibrant and of a beautiful natural quality.

Her voice is indeed that of the typical coloratura soprano, suited for the singing music of runs, and trills, through which Patti, Selika, Melba, Sembric and Tetrizzini have become known to the American opera going public.

While it is true that as long as there are Melba's and Tetrizzini's this class of music will always be sung and enjoyed by a large public. But music for this type of voice is no longer being written—Jules Massenet being the only one of the modern school who has composed some of this music in his operas—and it is out of fashion at present. This being the case it would hardly be advisable for Miss Alexander to cultivate her voice for this class of music, but following the example of Lillian Nordica, Lillie Lehman who at one time sung such roles of the "Violetta" and the "Filina" type, but later rose to such splendid heights as "Brunhilde" "Sieglinde" and "Isolde" or like Edyth Walker and Olive Fremstad who used to sing contralto roles, and are now dramatic sopranos, singing the same roles that Lehmann and Nordica later sung. And is it not true that Jean De Reszke who started out as a baritone singer, but

on finding that his upper tones were of a tenor quality he retired, and on later returning to the stage became the reigning tenor of his day in grand opera? If these singers succeeded in changing their voices, cannot Miss Alexander, under proper guidance change her voice to that of a lyric soprano, with a leaning towards the interpretation of dramatic soprano roles?

It cannot be denied that Miss Alexander's voice is still in a great need of color and dramatic expression, and it is also a fact that she has not given any attention to the histrionic side of her art, including facial expression. Now if after Marcella Sembric had made her debut, finding later that it was necessary for her to study the art of acting in order to meet the exacting requirements of the present day grand opera singer, will not Miss Alexander do well to follow her example? It is also true that in some of her songs she is unfinished and at times has not yet acquired the poise and serenity which are needful to a great singer, but these are qualities which are readily gained by proper instruction and experience. But she cannot acquire these much needed qualities at Howard, for to speak with no unkindness, but with a reverent regard for the truth, I am putting it mildly when I say that aside from her course of systematic practice she is wasting time, by her stay here. How can Howard with only two over-worked music teachers, afford to give this undeveloped genius the necessary attention for the cultivation of her wonderful gifts? There is, indeed, no inspiration here at present for even ordinary musical students, to say nothing concerning such talented pupils as Miss Alexander and the wonderfully gifted Miss Carrie Burton, not to mention many others. Miss Alexander should be in a constant atmosphere of art, say in New York, Boston, Chicago, Milan, Dresden, Berlin or Paris. In either

of these places with the proper teachers, she would be fairly disciplined. Artists must not, like weeds, grow in any direction they like, but must like lovely flowers, be trained to grow more beautiful each year. That and that only is true art.

One of the greatest draw backs to the Negro in his endeavor to scale the rough, stony heights to operatic fame is the lack of funds necessary in pursuing such a course. Miss Alexander is no exception to the above statement. She needs financial aid and rigid guidance under the best teacher available, while she is unusually gifted her triumphant future depends upon being properly taught and furnished with the necessary means, which will enable her to study. For without this the struggle to become a successful prima donna is difficult indeed, no matter how much talent there is—but these benefactors should not expect to direct their proteges careers. The pressure of actual living in this country is formidable and getting more complex every day. The cost of musical environment means a residence in New York or any other large musical center and a well filled exchequer in order to enjoy the luxury of attending concerts and operas. Tschaikowski, List, Wagner, Will M. Cook, Samuel Coleridge Taylor, Geraldine Farrar, Mary Garden, Edyth Walker, Bessie Abbott, Emma Calve, Enrico Caruso, Riccardo Martin, Lina Cavalieri, Edna Darch, and many others now before the public owe their great creativeness and success to the munificence of great philanthropic souls, who fostered and sheltered their genius from the sordid struggle for the material things of life.

Who will be the first to help Miss Alexander to reach this goal?

R. G. DOUGETT

Don't forget the big meet at Convention Hall, March 11. Big times.

IF WE HAD A LADY MAYOR

What a dream of a city we will have when the women voters elect women councilwomen and a woman mayor! The streets will shine like the morning and the cobblestones will bloom out in fragrant beauty. Playgrounds will take the place of lumberyards; the ugly, dirty factories will give way to beautiful parks and the fountains will play "O, Promise Me" at every corner. The policewoman at the crossing will wave her fan, and the wagons, teams and cars will move to the rhythmic beat like an orchestra. The locomotive whistles will be tuned, the car-gongs will tinkle like the chimes of the Swiss bell-ringer and no automobile horn will pass muster until it sounds like a symphony.

Clean streets, clean politics and clean collars and cuffs—they will be among the first demands. The streets must be dustless, the city government graftless, the skies cloudless. Men will be required to wipe their feet before stepping on the sidewalks and horses will be fined if they kick up the dust. Mirrors at every street corner, free powder puffs and municipal ownership of hair-dressing parlors are not at present included in the demands. These things must come gradually.

The report that the city ordinances will be crocheted is untrue, and the inclination to tie a sash around the City Hall and surmount the dome with a big butterfly bow will be curbed. The demand for free moving-picture shows and lemonade fountains in the parks will not be urged at present. But reform in ice-cream and cheaper chocolate drops are demanded at once.

Why should these reforms be delayed by inconsiderate men holding on to the city government and denying women the right to vote? "One half of us are still in bondage!" exclaims one of the leading suffragette orators. It is pathetic to see these bond-

slaves going through our principal streets, clad in silks, satins, and laces, carrying the burden of man's purse in the man's automobile and spending the man's money; while the tyrant man is enjoying the privilege of digging away in his office or factory.

Released from bondage, freed from the galling yoke, they faithfully promise to take charge of things and run them. Our cities have too long been run by ordinary-looking men, some of whom are not even good dressers. If we had a woman for mayor, the city would have to take a bath and a clean shave every morning. It would be kept well brushed, with all the buttons sewed on. You can see the vision of it now—a model city, clean, well-dressed and highly performed.

—New York Sun

THE EDITOR'S PHILOSOPHY

Life is a bump on existence.

Earth to some is a garbage can, to others a beautiful garden teeming with gaudy gayeties and wholesome plenitudes, but all decide it is the best place to live in.

The best way to make a speech effective is to pray it; for those whose minds are eager to hear what you have to say will listen without coaxing, while those who are disinterested will go to sleep and thereby will not disturb the others.

THE COWARD'S MOTTO

If at first you don't succeed, succumb.

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A LUCID EXPLANATION

"A steam turbine," says Mr. Emmet J. Scott, "closely resembles an ordinary cart wheel with individual butter dishes set at right angles around the edge, the whole shooting match being inclosed in an affair that looks like a limburger packing case. When you want it to move you push a bunch of steam through a little hole in the middle of one edge, and if it doesn't go fast enough you put some more coal on the fire. When you want it to quit whizzing you turn off the spigot. The beauty about it is that you can make it work harder with less hotness than any thing else on the market."

AN UNUSUAL OFFER

Mr. Rosenwall, a Jew has offered to add \$2500 to the gift of every city which will raise \$7500 for the erection of a colored Y. M. C. A. building. This is a most unusual offer, coming as it does from a Jew and for the erection of a Christian institution. The reason for such a gift is the sympathy he has for a race that has been discriminated against, ridiculed, oppressed, yea persecuted. He is the member of a despised race but of a race that has really triumphed in America. He feels it a duty to help this race to rise to throw off oppression and overcome oppression. He could find no stronger agent to accomplish this than the Y. M. C. A.

Where can we find a more Christ-like spirit? There's the spirit of a Jew. This is one of the whitest, most beautiful and Christian acts of beneficence ever perpetuated. He is as his name means, "A Forest of Roses."

May the Negroes take advantage of these offers and elevate themselves. C. H. G.

Don't fail to read next week's issue of the JOURNAL. You will see something that interests you.

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Students and Alumni of the University are
invited to contribute. Address all com-
munications to

Howard University Journal,
Howard University,
Washington, D. C.

Friday, February 17, 1911

EDITORIALS

◀ It is indeed a sign of friendliness and good will on part of some of the greater powers of Europe after they have appropriated unto themselves as many slices of the little republic's territory as they desire, to cooperate with the United States in placing it upon a sound financial basis. Along with an International Court of Arbitration it would probably be well to establish an International Conscience Fund.

◀ The debaters for the coming fight with Fisk and Atlanta have been chosen. Some fast and earnest work must be done to get

our teams ready. The battle with these two schools will not be easily won. The split in our debating club has caused a great deal of trouble and it will be some time before the society can do the same amount of good work that it did last year. The team has on it two new, untried men, who we hope will get into the saddle and stay there until the battle is won. Last year's victories must be borne in mind. Howard cannot afford to lose after such a glorious series of victories. The men ought to be given full time for individual work and a thorough research into the subject.

¶ Send your contributions to the JOURNAL, but do not send a volume. We wish we had space available for treatises on various subjects but our limited space forces us to devote our efforts to securing short spicy topics that will probably interest the greatest number. If our students supported our paper we could devote more of our space to the subjects most interesting to them, but the students form only a small part of our number of subscribers. Therefore we must endeavor to interest the public as well as the students. Many times we would like to have a heart-to-heart talk with our fellow-students and discuss things that concern us particularly, but owing to the nature of the case and lack of student support we are compelled to remain forever in a public session.

¶ The effort of the H. C. T. D. A. W. and C. Club to erect a bronze bust to the memory of George Walker is most worthy. It seems that we little appreciate the wonderful achievements of this great man who was truly great, a genius, a pioneer in his line. When any man has arisen from the humble position of a boot black to an entertainer of kings and the idol of the wealthiest people of this great nation he deserves more than honorable

mention. His triumph over the "The Syndicate," the greatest evil and obstacle in the theatrical world, and his successful playing in the finest class play houses throughout this prejudiced country of ours speaks thunder tones for his energy, ambition, initiative and diplomacy. The fact that he presented the greatest musical comedy chorus in the world and had the strongest cast of supporters of any musical comedy in the country makes him deserving of all the praise that can be given him. We must learn to recognize and appreciate genius wherever it appears and more especially when it has been fully developed and properly directed. The club could do no better thing to show their appreciation for this great man.

¶ In the Michigan Legislature the Verdier Bill, a bill to prohibit the intermarriage of Whites or Caucasians and persons wholly or in part of African, Chinese or Japanese birth or descent, has been passed. This should not cause the Negroes any unusual alarm. It may be true that such legislation is only a forerunner of greater discriminations in the future. Such legislation speaks strongly for the progress of the Negro in Michigan. Wherever the Negro is a growing economic factor or is rapidly tending to become a strong economic factor,

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wherever the Negro show signs of becoming a formidable future competitor for bread and dollars with the more favored brother he may expect such legislation as a means of self defense at long range. The white brother is preparing for war in time of peace; he is looking ahead.

So far as the prohibition of intermarriage itself is concerned, that deserves no comment. There are a very few marriages of Negroes with Whites and what few there are neither contribute anything to either race, nor take anything away from either race; for the parties to the contract are pretty much on the same level. The thoughtful, sensible Negro has just as much race pride as his Caucasian friends and is not anxious to marry out of his race.

If Michigan wants to enact some effective marriage laws she could accomplish something by fixing such qualifications for marriage as would assure the state that the husband would be able to support a wife, that both man and woman present a health certificate, that no drunkard be permitted to marry, that no mentally unbalanced person be permitted to take unto himself another half. The Verdier Bill if it becomes a law will never throw a stone in the path of progress of the Negro. His future does not depend upon intermarriage but upon the preservation of his racial identity and upon fighting with all the power that he can summon to make himself an absolutely indispensable factor in this civilization. To do this he must become a fruitful source of some utility, he must become a producer along some line.

Don't forget the play, the place, and the date—'The Merry Wives'.

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VOCATIONAL TRAINING

A trade school is an agency that trains one for its contest of study as well as through it. Manual training schools have only the latter function. There is only one other agency besides the trade school that fits one directly for his vocation—the business high school. In Washington, and I suppose the same is true of other places, there is a dearth of master Negro bricklayers, carpenters, plasterers, plumbers, etc., and yet any number of Negro common laborers. These men had no incentive to pursue a classical, literary or even manual training course when in school and hence dropped out to fill the lower places in our industrial system. Had the inducements of a trade school been held out to them, it can not be doubted that a large number of these same common laborers would now be master workmen instead of helpers with more opportunity of advancement.

These and other statements were made by Prof. Arthur Newman of the M St. High School in support of his argument for trade schools in the district. The lecture was delivered before the Bethel Literary and Historical Society at its last meeting and again before a number of school teachers at the M Street High School on last Thursday. Prof. Kelly Miller characterizes it as the best argument he has ever heard for vocational schools.

BY "SUNSHINE"

Some say the dear preachers won't run,
But if you want to have some fun,
Just find you out a unique fake
In the form of a rubber snake.

Then come over and let it fall
In dining room of Miner Hall,
Then stand aside to see the fun,
And you'll have the proof that preachers run.

ALPHA PHI ELECTION

Mr. James W. Parker was chosen president of the Alpha Phi Literary Society at the semi-annual election which took place last Friday night in the Library Hall. As in former times the election was one of unusual interest and the contest while it lasted waxed warm and sharp. The candidates for the presidency were Mr. J. W. Parker and Mr. Harry L. Scott, Mr. Parker winning finally by a majority of seven votes.

An attempt was made to hold the election a week previous when after several interesting speeches from both sides, the candidates were put in the field. Mr. Scott was nominated by Mr. J. C. McKelvie and the nomination seconded by Messrs. Gibbs Walker and Warricks. Mr. Parker was nominated by Mr. E. M. A. Chander and his nomination seconded in very able speeches by Messrs. Kelly, Wimberly, Curley and Butler. A ballot was taken showing Mr. Parker elected by a vote of 49 to 46. In the subsequent meeting, the election was not sustained by the house and a new ballot was ordered. On this ballot Mr. Parker received 58 votes to his opponents 51 and was duly acclaimed president. Without further delay other officers were elected as follows:

- Miss Lena Jenkins, Vice President.
- Miss Marie Forrest, Secretary.
- Miss Madre Penn, Assistant Secretary.
- Mr. P. B. Lennox, Treasurer.
- Mr. C. H. Donnele, Journalist.
- Mr. C. Pat Murphy, Critic.
- Mr. H. L. Scott, Serg't-at-arms.
- Mr. Ferguson, Chaplain.

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CAMPUS JOTS

Prof. Tunnell addressed the Y. I. C. A. last Sunday.

The prayer meeting last Tuesday night was led by Dean Clark.

Dr. Garland Penn of the Epworth League, Methodist Episcopal Church, spoke at Chapel last Tuesday.

A large crowd was present at Vesper Service last Sunday. The address was delivered by Prof. Tunnell.

Dr. E. L. Parks left last week for the West whither he was called on account of the serious illness of a near relative.

The Freshman Class of the School of Liberal Arts held exercises last Monday afternoon in commemoration of Frederick Douglass.

Prof. Kelly Miller and Secretary Geo. W. Cook made a flying trip to Philadelphia last Tuesday to attend a banquet given by the Howard University Alumni of that city.

On next Sunday, February 19, the regular Vesper Service will take the form of a Service of Song and Praise.

A silver offering is expected at the door of all who attend.

Mr. Montgomery Gregory, one of our instructors, delivered an address on Frederick Douglass at the Mu-so-lit Club last Friday evening. He delivered the same address before the students of the Armstrong Manual Training School last Tuesday.

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AN ANNOUNCEMENT

The Senior Class of the School of Liberal Arts will hold a Reception on Thursday evening, March sixteenth, nineteen hundred and eleven at Odd Fellows Hall. Lyric Orchestra. The subscription will be 50 cents. All persons desiring invitation for themselves and friends can obtain them from any member of the Senior Class or by sending their names to the Reception Committee of Senior Class, School of Liberal Arts, Howard University.

Douglass Sumner Celebration

The Department of History under the direction of Prof. William V. Tunnel, on Wednesday night, in Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, rendered an elaborate program in honor of the memory and deeds of Frederick Douglass and Charles Sumner. Orations were delivered by Misses Anna M. Cecil, Jimmie B. Bugg, Messers. Lorenzo D. Turner, John H. Purnell and E. Clayton Terry. These orations were excellently rendered and showed the result of earnest effort and diligent research. The poise and delivery of the speakers deserves special commendation. The star oration was delivered by Mr. E. C. Terry, whose subject "Dead Yet Speaketh," was full of life and eloquence. The University Glee Club rendered several beautiful selections. Although the singing of the Glee Club was good it does not come up to the work of the organization of last year. The boys seem to be uncertain; they do not get together as of old. This we are reminded is their initial appearance under the new organization, and since it cannot be denied that they have the material, we believe that with more practice they will equal if not eclipse the club of last year.

Miss Perle Alexander, accompanied by Miss Dyke sang two very beautiful numbers, the classy rendition of which took unstinted applause from the audi-

ence. Miss G. Paoli Green played a first class piano solo and gave it such interpretation and color to her work that marks an exhibition of talent of the highest order. The piano selection rendered by Mr. C. Y. Harris showed to those observant what individualism means in favor of a performer. His selection was received with much applause.

Well may the Department of History be congratulated for kindling afresh in our minds the memory and appreciation for such whole-souled, humanity-loving men as Frederick Douglass, the slave, the freeman, the agitator and the liberator; and as Charles Sumner, the man, the legislator, the reformer and the martyr.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

As the years roll on, the fame of Lincoln has been rising, "Born among the lowliest of the lowly, trained in the merciless school of adversity and penury, he rose in public life and became the leading American of his time." Perhaps the greatest thing that can be said of Lincoln is that he was a MAN, a man in every sense of the word, a man in his kindness of heart, in his patience, in his sincerity of purpose and a man of sorrow.

From pulpit and platform, in all sections of the world, eulogies are being pronounced on Abraham Lincoln, the patriot, the statesman, prophet and leader of men. He attained the greatest heights because of his love for humanity, his love for truth and honesty. He loved liberty, believed in the people and battled for the rights of man. He was a friend of the masses and a champion of the oppressed.

While Lincoln was not devoted to any particular creed, he was deeply religious and his reverence for God is shown in all his writings. His spirit was the Christ spirit: he was the Saviour of the nation.—C. H. G.

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