"The Emperor Effaces Himself"

I

Eight modest, unassuming brass bands blared away down Lenox Avenue. It was August 1, 1934, and the Emperor Marcus Garvey was sneaking down the Avenue in terrible dread lest he attract attention to himself. He succeeded nobly, for scarcely fifty thousand persons saw his parade file past trying to hide itself behind numerous banners of red, green, and black.

This self-effacement was typical of Mr. Garvey and his organization. He would have no fuss nor bluster—a few thousand pennants string across the street overhead, eight or nine bands, a regiment or two, a few floats, a dozen or so of titled officials and he was ready for his annual parade. It was pointed out that the pennants were used solely to pinpoint the route as the "Royal African Guards" were mounted and the horses had to shown which way to go.

The uniforms worn by the paraders were so colorless that they gave strength to the rumor that Mr. Garvey's visit to THOCol. Simons of the K.A.K. had been successful and that he and all of his followers had become members of the "Invisible Empire".

Mr. Garvey himself wore an Admiral's hat hidden under a mass of red and green plumes. Not to appear too partial to the navy, he wore a General's uniform set off by a few fat ropes of gold braid, a sash and a saber. His men wore black suits with stripes of red braid running hither and yon. Perhaps under anyone else they would have been dressed entirely in scarlet, but Mr. Garvey said 'no'. He was very firm in the matter.

Back in 1920 for his parade Garvey had worn a purple robe with a black hood lined with red and green silk. But he revolted against
such gaudiness—hence the plumes.

II

As a military genius he had no faith in himself at all. The he was a Admiralissimo of the "African Navy", Generalissimo of the "African Legions", he frequently expressed a fearful lack of confidence. But these expressions placed side by side with his mighty accomplishments are proof positive of the man's overwhelming modesty.

"When I get to Africa with my invincible Black Army, I shall not ask Great Britain what she is doing there, I shall tell her to 'get out!'. I shall not ask France what she is doing there, I shall tell her to 'get out! I shall not ask Belgium what she is doing there, I shall tell her to 'get out! and so on until I have kicked every white man out of Africa!"

Perhaps he felt this charming reserve because he had never had a day of military experience in his life.

On the walls of his living room in 129th Street, there hung a large picture of Napoleon. On the opposite wall hung one, still larger, of himself. It is evident he wished no comparisons drawn. If he had, he would have caused them to be hung side by side.

"You already have the governors of Europe trembling." He announced a little further on, "Lloyd George has warned the other statesmen to look out for Marcus Garvey, and you can rest assured that Marcus Garvey is looking out for Lloyd George."

III

With his Negro contemporaries, whom lesser souls might have considered rivals and consequently felt the pangs of jealousy, he was never too busy to pause and pay them compliments. Of W.E.B. Du Bois he said: "Fifty years from now, Du Bois will still be sending petitions to Congress. Marcus will be coming up the Hudson Bay (river) with a flotilla of battle-ships, dreadnaughts, cruisers, submarines and aeroplanes to land the first African ambassador in the United States. The next day he will dine at the White House."

The indolence of some of his race brethren stirred his great spirit. He himself was willing to serve, was eager to save. They not only refrained from saving themselves, but actively objected to his saving so much. Fearfully he read them out—expelled them bodaciously from the race. Bleached and faded, they go scowling about the limbo of nothingness that borders the land of races. Thus passed DuBois, James Weldon Johnson and William Pickens from among the Negro living, and are seen no more.

But with his officers and others who shared his saal, he was most generous. Of his wealth of titles, he gave and gave till it hurt them to carry all that he gave them. Behold his "Duke of Uganda!" His "Knight Commander of the Sublime Order of the Nile!" "Supreme Deputy Potentates", "High Chancellor", "High Auditor" and "Lords" and "Ladies" aplenty.

For himself he kept almost nothing. He was merely Managing Editor of the Negro World, Pres. of the Black Star Steamship and Navigation Line, Pres.-General of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, Supreme Ruler of the Sublime Order of the Nile, Provisional Pres. of Africa and Commander-in-Chief of the "African Legions".

With rare foresight, he saw that the redeeming of the entire continent of Africa would take time. It would be no easy task to make it safe for the black folk of the world. They must not be too optimistic he told them.

"Ninety days from now (Aug. 1920) we will have an ambassador at the court of France; ninety days from now we will have an ambassador at the court of St. James; ninety days from now we will have an ambassador at the court of St. Petersburg; ninety days from now we will have an ambassador at the court of Moscow; ninety days from now we will have a Black House side by side with the White House in Washington."

He might have demanded the entire site on which the White House stands, but you see, he generously offers to share it. He will permit even the conquered whites to have an executive mansion side by side with his.
Democratic soul that he was, he frequently honored the whims of his subordinates. If the military men wished to call themselves the "Royal African Guards" and trick themselves out in the uniform of the Jamaica Police, he could not find it in his heart to deny them so simple a pleasure. They probably derived great happiness from the parade in which they figured. He yielded also to the women who wished to call themselves "The Ladies of the Royal Court of Ethiopia."

Modest and reserved himself, he loved these qualities in others. He was most severe with those who endeavored in one way or another to thrust themselves into prominence unduly.

For instance, a stockholder, coming to Garvey's office one day while the guard was absent, actually entered the place unannounced! The President promptly threw him out again. Such methods of advancing one's self in the world cannot too vigorously squelched.

A.L. Gaines, Capt. of the African Legions, to whom the organization owed a few hundred dollars, went to the office and brazenly demanded his pay. This flagrant example of selfish greed was put down ruthlessly. The Capt. was thrown out also. How else could Mr. Garvey preach to the world the high spiritual aims of the organization if his officers' minds clung to thoughts of pay? Why, he himself would not accept more than five hundred or more dollars per month — scarcely enough to keep a millionaire alive!

Even Sir William H. Ferris, K.C.S.O.N. (Knight Commander of the Sublime Order of the Nile), Vice Pres. of the U.N.I.A., Treasurer of the Negro Factory Corporation, Literary Ed. of the Negro World, was so lacking in taste as to lead a group of factory workers seeking pay into the Imperial suite. He was severely rebuked.

"How dare you bring anyone into my office without my consent?" Mr. Garvey asked him. Any amount of abuse heaped upon such vulgar social climbing would not be too much.
5.

One is not surprised to learn that he hated praise. One of his followers who continually shouted "God and Garvey" at every meeting, was silenced by being made Speaker of the Convention.

VI

Mr. Garvey hired several lawyers to advise him at various times. They were evidently men of small calibre. They purported to be lawyers, but invariably he knew more about legal processes than they. Furthermore, a more sensitive, touchy lot never lived. If Mr. Garvey playfully hinted that they were useless and needed not clutter up the place any longer, they resigned. He was forced more than once to take cases out of their hands and go into court and conduct them himself. He knew no law, but 'his not to reason why, his but to go and try'. Once he was forced to be both lawyer and witness, to ask and answer his own questions.

Garvey, lawyer: Do you know Capt. Gaines?

Garvey, witness: Yes.

Garvey, lawyer: How long have you known him?

Garvey, witness: Four years.

Garvey, lawyer: Was he ever employed by you?

Garvey, witness: Yes.

Garvey, lawyer: In what capacity?

Garvey, witness: I appointed him Captain of the "African Legion".

Later on, he was forced to conduct his own defense before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Govt. either out of fear of Mr. Garvey, or envy of his great conquests, arrested him on the flimsy charge of using the mails to defraud.

Fraud? Ridiculous! Of course, he had sold a few trifling thousand dollars worth of Black Star Line stock before he had a ship, he had sold a few passages to Africa on a ship that did not exist, but what's a few little ships among emperors? But what the cry of fraud? He had taken the people's money and he was keeping it. That was how he had become the greatest man of his race.

Booker T. Washington had achieved some local notice for collecting monies and spending it on a Negro school. It had never occurred to him to keep it.
Marcus Garvey was much in advance of the old school of thinkers. Hence he stood in places never dreamed of by Booker T. Washington. There have been some whisperings concerning W. E. B. DuBois on account of his efforts to lower the violent mortality rate among his people, and advance their interests generally, but he never learned how to keep the people's money, and so missed true greatness.

Mr. Garvey set up one night and learned law. The next day he bravely took the burden of the case upon himself. Even tho he realized he had not a chance in the world against the District Attorney, he assumed the responsibility.

"When I get thru with that little Jew Dist. Atty., he will be so mad you will have to hunt for him with a candle."

These are some of the telling points he drove home for the defense, in spite of the prosecution.

1. Capt. Gaines, prosecution witness on the stand. (The same who had been dismissed without pay by Mr. Garvey, and thrown out of the office)

Garvey: What is your personal opinion of Marcus Garvey— is he honest and sincere?

Capt. Gaines: He spent the money you got by fraud on race horses and women.

2. Sidney De Bourg: Prosecution witness.

Garvey: Did you ever have a conversation with "Lady" De Bourg concerning Marcus Garvey?

DeBourg: Yes.

Garvey: What was said during this conversation about Marcus Garvey?

DeBourg: She said you were impossible and the only thing to do was to let you fall over a precipice and break your neck.

Judge Julian Mack, before whom the case was being tried, asked both sides to rush because a Zionist convention was to be held soon in Chicago, and he wished to be present. With rare self-effacement Garvey asked, "Would you rush this case to attend a convention when the liberty of Marcus Garvey is at stake?"
His unselfish desire to help is shown by a remark he made to one of his officers out of court.

"I have preached and shown these preachers how to preach, and now I'll show these lawyers how to practice law."

Very Touching! With only one night of law to his name, he was willing to share it with the benighted legal profession.

Tho he had no college training, he was a thirster after knowledge. After his address to the jury, he decided to study law, and asked a law student about entrance requirements.

Sergeant: Do you have to have a college degree?

Student: Yes.

Sergeant: How about a man as famous as me - don't they have any special provisions?

The jury sniggered. His college career by finding him guilty, but Judge Heck was more sympathetic. He urged Mr. Garvey to take a five-year course in practical geology as being more helpful than the practice of law.

That instance is not instance of affection for the higher learning. He wanted to be a patron of Letters so he founded our rather created Booker T. Washington University out of a twenty-foot board and nailed it up where all might see. Of course, the alumni of this university might be only splinters, but even so, it shows the lofty ambition of the man.

VII

He was a fearless seeker after truth. By scientific investigation, he discovered that the Virgin Mary was a black woman, and that Jesus Christ a quintessentially "passing" these two thousand years. So, what could be fairer than showing them in their true colors? Nothing, according to the 1934 edition of his modest little parade.

VIII

In five years he will be free. Already he has forgiven us our sins and is willing to stand and help us. But the Government says, 'no'. The Black