

# INTRODUCTION

By Mr. E. B. Taylor



Mr. Robert W. Coleman, in conceiving and compiling the first Colored Business Directory, performed a service of incalculable value to all the people, not only of this city and state, but of the country. As far as I have been able to ascertain, there was no such systematic collection anywhere in the United States, prior to his inauguration of it in Baltimore, although since then the idea has been extensively copied throughout the Union.

As a result of not having such a record, when we wished to address the colored business community, it was essential to go through all sorts of round about ways to secure their names. In southern communities the usual method was to plod through several thousand pages of a city directory, selecting the names preceded by a star. This was often inaccurate and unsatisfactory, as I know personally scores of colored people whose names were not as marked, due to the fact that a light skinned person would answer the queries of the solicitor, or because the house was perhaps too nice looking for a colored tenant (in the judgment of the same men) or because it seemed too busy a place, or too large a corporation for a person of color. Mr. Coleman by collecting these names into a compact little volume has saved time which cannot be estimated.

His rewards have not of course been commensurate with the good he has accomplished.

Before closing I want to pay a tribute to the wonderful disposition of the compiler of this volume. If there is any person in the world whose disposition I envy, it is "Bob" Coleman's.

A young, active man, interested in social, business and political activities, is suddenly stricken almost blind. A wife, six (6) beautiful children (and they girls) to care for, a man would almost feel justified in giving way to despair. Not so Mr. Coleman. He has never stopped to realize he is not like other men. With renewed vigor, undaunted he set out, found new avenues of profit, has gotten his girls to the point where one is about to graduate, has maintained his home, kept up his cheerful, optimistic disposition and has constantly climbed the rounds of the ladder of success. His life is an inspiration to us all, who when much more minor troubles assail us, are ready to throw up our hands in surrender. He deserves, if any one does, the general support of all.