

# PRINCETON MEN WON SHEEPSKINS BY NEGRO'S AID

## Class of 1900 Assisted By Alex A. Watkins

The relentless thirst for that place "in the sun" achieved by Edward L. Harris, former janitor-student at Pittsburgh University, who recently was named head of the chemistry department of Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio, today led to the discovery of another enviable post won by a Negro shortly after the turn of the present century.

Many graduates of Princeton's Class of 1900 will probably agree that they won their "sheepskins" through the kindly and patient assistance of Alexander Dumas Watkins. This kindly and extremely modest man worked in a menial capacity at Princeton University for eight years before he was made an instructor at that world-famed university.

Watkins, the only Negro who has ever acted in the role of instructor at Princeton, was first discovered to have a profound knowledge of histology. Students often visited him at his work, seeking aid in difficult problems. When it became known to the faculty he later was permitted to tutor some of the students who were back in their work. This was about the year 1898.

### Made Assistant

Four years later, in 1901, Watkins was made an assistant instructor in the biological department. During the next two years in that department, he was credited with making a number of clever experiments. He was considered the brightest member of his race ever to reside in Princeton.

In comparing Watkins with Harris, the youth who recently reached his goal, it is readily seen that the former, who worked hard for the sole purpose of making a living, was "discovered" because he possessed a natural ability in scientific subjects. His reward sort of grew on him, whereas, in the case of Harris, success in the field of teaching came as the result of a definite course of hard plugging with an object in view.

### Direct Descendant

Watkins, who bore the name, "Alexander Dumas," was probably a direct descendant of Alexandre Dumas, the French dramatic author and novelist, whose father was the natural son of the Marquis Davy de la Pailleterie, a rich colonist of Santo Domingo, and of a Negro woman whose name was Dumas.

For Watkins, the honor of being the first Negro (and perhaps the only one) to hold an instructorship at Princeton, came late in a comparatively short life. He was about 48 years old when he was given recognition for his ability. He died, January 4th or 5th, 1903, at the age of 51, leaving a widow and several children.