

# Africo-American Presbyterian

"AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—John viii:32

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## LITERATURE OF THE NEGRO

By W. J. Cash, In The Charlotte News

One of the most interesting things that have been happening in the field of American writing in the last ten or fifteen years—a period in which an enormous number of interesting things have been happening—is the thing that has been happening to the literature of the Negro. And by the "literature of the Negro," I mean both literature about Negroes, whether written by black or white, and the productions by black men themselves.

Down to the 1920's, novels or poetry written by white writers about Negroes all dealt with him from within the frame of an immensely narrow convention—presented him after a set pattern as rigid and as abstract as that of any PUNCHINELLO who ever figured in the old masked comedies of the Middle Ages. He was either an Uncle Tom, infinitely devoted and infinitely full of quaint humor and croll tales, or he was Jim Crow, that banjo-picking, heel-fingling, hi-yi-ing Negro, first concocted by Christie, the father of the minstrel show, back in the 1840's and elaborated through all the generations since, or if he was not strictly always one of these, then, at the uttermost, he was, as in novels of Thomas Dixon, Jr., a menace, a sort of cosmic Rape-fiend forever in wait for unwary virgins. But whatever his mask, he was ultimately only a symbol to set off tears of laughter or bitter anger as the case might be—was never recognizable and in his own right a human being in the round.

But not any more. Julia Peterkin sounded the death knell of the convention when she published her "Green Thursday." She drove the sword into its vitals with her "Black April." And what she had begun was quickly finished by such writers as DuBose Heyward and Howard Odum, whose "Raintow Round My Shoulder" for the first time got at the truth behind the figure of Jim Crow. Today there are a dozen white writers who concern themselves with delineating the black man in terms of direct observation. The reaction against the convention has gone so far, indeed, that there is no longer any market for the writings of those who cling to it, save in a few of the popular journals which still labor under the impression that William McKinley is presently parked in the East Room of the White House.

It would be too much to say, I think, that any of these white novelists have really yet got down to the Negro whole—that they have taken us fully into his mind and soul. Mrs. Peterkin's novels, for instance, are open to grave criticism on the score that, in their way, they tend too much to present the black man's life as an idyll. Nevertheless, at least a relatively honest approach has come into vogue—which is a very great advance.

When we turn to the Negro writers themselves, we find that their numbers have greatly increased in the period of which I speak. Hearing of Negro literature in 1920, one thought of Phyllis Wheatley, of the biography of Frederick Douglass, of Washington's "Up From Slavery," of W. E. B. DuBois' "The Souls of Black Folk," of the poetry of Paul Lawrence Dunbar—and what else? But today the names are legion. There are Wallace Thurman and Langston Hughes and Claude McKay and Jean Toomer and Rudolph Fisher, all young and all of great competence in both fiction and verse. There is Countee Cullen, a lyric poet of high order. There is James Weldon Johnson, scarcely less talented than Cullen as a poet, and

the author of the intensely absorbing "Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man." There are Frank Horne and Gwendolyn Bennett and Jessie Fauset and Sterling Brown and Lewis Alexander and Angelina Grimke and William S. Braithwaite—every one of them capable makers of verse. And there are Walter White and Arthur Schomburg and George Schuyler and Kelly Miller and Alain Locke and Benjamin Brawley—famous for their essays, and all of whom have made all or the great part of their reputations since 1920.

We find, moreover, that the works of these Negro writers are increasingly displaying a new forthrightness and independence. Whereas the novels of the older men usually deal with Negroes who have gotten into the professions and are doing their level best to be simply sun-burned white men, those of Hughes and McKay and others begin to concern themselves with the common black man, with roustabouts and stevedores and laborers in the factory and on the land. And all the makers of essays and articles have gone over from the position of Booker Washington to that of Du Bois, and no few of them have gone far beyond Du Bois. Many of these writers are hysterical in their assertion of race consciousness, indeed, and nearly all of them are too much obsessed by the white man. Still, their pride in being black, their insistence on self-respect before the white man, and their concern with the race in general, is a more healthy state of affairs than the old servile subservience with hate (too often) lurking behind it and the old itch to get themselves somewhat white.

No member of the race has as yet gotten into the really first rank of American writers. But with their growing competence and their growing numbers, the thing promises to happen one of these days.

### AMERICAN EDUCATORS ARE LISTED IN NEW VOLUME

New York, July.—"Who's Who in American Education," published here, is an imposing volume of approximately 7,000 biographical sketches of prominent educators, with photographs of more than 4,000 of them.

An alphabetical check of the book reveals the names of Negro educators as follows: Mary E. Branch, President, Tillotson College; Benjamin G. Brawley, English, Howard University; Herman G. Canady, psychology, West Virginia State College; John W. Davis, President, West Virginia State College; Harry W. Green, education, West Virginia State College; Theodosius L. Gunn, librarian, Johnson C. Smith University; Dwight G. W. Holmes, dean, graduate school, Howard University; George W. Jackson, language, Florida A. and M. College; James F. Lane, President, Lane College; Ralph O'H. Lanier, dean, Houston Junior College; Jesse J. Mark, Jr., biology, Kentucky State Industrial College; B. E. Mays, dean, School of Religion, Howard University; Henry L. McCrorey, Johnson C. Smith University; Lucius Smith, business administration, Bluefield State Teachers' College; Alruthus A. Taylor, dean, Fisk University; Lorenzo D. Turner, English, Fisk University.

Among the nationally known educators who are not included are Dr. Mordecai Johnson, President of Howard University, and Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, Principal of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.

### THE KNOX PRESBYTERIAL YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE, FESSENDEN, FLA.

Once again the Conference of the Florida part of Knox Presbytery greets you through the columns of this paper. We are ever growing bigger and better and our missionary, Rev. H. M. Scott, is putting forth every effort to make it the best of all the Conferences. This, you will see, is quite evident, when you shall have completed this article.

The doors of Fessenden Academy were opened wide to welcome the delegates on June 8th. This school is under the auspices of the American Missionary Association and is situated 8 miles North of Ocala, Fla., in a very quiet and lovely spot. There are seven very modern buildings with all the equipment to make one comfortable. The President turns the buildings over to the Conference.

The doors of this Conference were first opened June 14, 1933, with 25 delegates, eager to help put the program over. At that time the constitution was drawn up and the officers elected. The officers were as follows: Director, Dr. A. B. McCoy; Dean, Rev. H. M. Scott; President, Mrs. E. J. Gregg; Vice-President, Rev. O. M. McAdams; Secretary, Miss M. L. Turner, and Treasurer, Mrs. H. M. Scott.

Although this was a small beginning as far as the numbers are concerned, the courage was great. June 13, 1934, found the doors opened again to the Conference with only 24 present, but not the least discouraged. Some smiled because it opened on the 13th. Do you think that was the cause of the decrease? June 11, 1935, the Conference was pleased to register 33 delegates—beginning to wake up, you say. Just read on, June 9, 1936, 63 delegates all bubbling over with energy met at Fessenden Academy. Let me say it again with a loud voice, 63 delegates! Somebody had been working and working hard. You are smiling to yourself, but when you consider that there are only five Negro Presbyterian churches in the State of Florida, and, for the most part, a good distance apart, and that only four of these churches were represented with delegates, and that there is no Presbyterian boarding school, you will not wonder that we marvel at this increase of delegates.

"Give honor to whom honor is due." You have often heard this quoted, so here we go. Rev. H. M. Scott, who is the all-efficient missionary of Florida, found the beautiful school in which our Conferences are held and invited us there. He knows how to get around and make it pleasant for everyone. His wife, Mrs. H. M. Scott, who is pleasing at all times, together with the girls from their missions, saw to it that we received a sufficient amount of palatable food. To Rev. and Mrs. Scott we owe the credit for about a third of the delegation or more, representing their work with the Community Sunday Schools. Our hats are off to Rev. and Mrs. Scott!

We were honored with the presence of the following, representing the other half of the Conference: Dr. and Mrs. A. S. Clarke, Rev. and Mrs. W. C. Jones, Rev. and Mrs. S. Q. Mitchell and family and Miss Essie B. Taylor. They were not there just to look on only; each had some part in making the Conference "Bigger and Better."

The usual class room work was had under the leadership of a very competent faculty. The general layout of the program was the same as in other Conferences. Each person, I think, received some special benefit from the Conference and went home from the mount of privilege to do better work. We were sorry Rev. B. J.

Hobson, of Palatka, Fla., could not be with us on account of the death of one of his faithful members. He did not fail to send his assessment and good wishes to all present. The many friends of Rev. and Mrs. O. M. McAdams will regret to hear of the wreck they had on their return trip to St. Petersburg. One young lady sustained a broken arm and Rev. McAdams had to purchase a new car.

During the absence of Miss M. L. Turner, Mr. Charles Simmons was elected Secretary. He comes from Jacksonville and is doing fine work. Miss Turner is the registrar for the Conference. So here's to you for a Bigger and Better Conference for 1937. Let us be up and away!

M. L. TURNER.

### THE SYRACUSE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Rev. J. Burton Harper

There is something really enchanting and glorious which comes to one attending the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. This is a body of broad-hearted, soul-winning men and women meeting together to do business for the Master on terms of fellowship and peace. There is a feeling of joy and delight as you come in contact with a thousand or more personalities whose hearts are on fire with the Spirit of the Christ.

Dr. Lewis S. Mudge, the efficient Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, is a hard working man, but congenial and considerate in every deliberation. Dr. Joseph A. Vance, a churchman of the first rank and order, was ever on the job for the progress of the Christian Church. Dr. Matthews and the newly elected Moderator, Dr. Master, with hundreds of others, were high lights of the glorious sessions of the Assembly carried on in the beautiful, commodious Lincoln High School Auditorium.

The meetings, consisting of much business, with the judicial commission kept busy, were highly spiritual. It is impossible to describe the brotherhood and fellowship displayed among and by the group. Dr. Jennings and the people of Syracuse went their limit to care for the Assembly. The fellowship dinner in the spacious dining room of the Syracuse Hotel was a picture of delight and heavenly joy. I sat at a table of ten with myself. Those men were young, cultured and spiritual. We talked of college and university experiences, and some of the Christian ministry. The action of the men made me feel most comfortable during the hour or more of this great dinner. It would be a joy to heaven if our beloved country throughout could and would display such love and fellowship one toward the other regardless of color or race. I fully believe the religion of Jesus Christ can and will bring this about.

It was the joy of my life to be present at, perhaps, the greatest General Assembly that has occurred in the last fifty years. I trust that nothing may occur to retard this fellowship and happiness, if union with the Southern Church or any other section of the country, or even the world, can be had, may it come without disturbing the peace, love and cooperation existing between our Church, U. S. A., and any of its constituents.

Rocky Mount, N. C.

No man, in common good faith to his fellow citizens, may rightfully assume the duties of the high office of Chief Executive and take the oath that goes with the office, unless he shall intend to keep and shall keep his oath inviolate. — Governor Landon.

It is estimated that there are 250,000 Negro Catholics in the United States.

## WHY ARE NATIONS CONCERNED ABOUT POPULATION?

Dallas, Texas, July. — (By Claude C. Tedford for ANP.)—Statistics of Progress! That is what comprised a good bit of the exhibit space in the Hall of Negro Life at the Texas Centennial. But few of these statistics are as interesting as those to be found in the Bureau of Census booth set up by Charles E. Hall, Specialist in Negro Statistics, Washington, D. C.

Among these statistics are figures on the trend of population that should interest every educator, every civic leader, every divine, every business man throughout the nation. In countries like Italy, France and Germany, population means everything. For many years Italy especially has been crying for more space to spread her millions, yet she has put premiums on the large family. Large, healthy families have been played-up—not birth control. Despite the supplanting of man power by machines, leaders of countries like these realize that there is still strength in the masses.

But what about the Negro population in America, in these United States of our? Is it increasing or decreasing? Are our educated young men and women marrying and reproducing their kind?

Well, who cares anyway? The undertaker is elated, in a manner of speaking, when there is good business. The physician will render fine service when there are babes to be brought safely into the world. But as to the ratio of life and death, who is watching this?

Will nature take care of things? Nature does provide quite well for animals, but she gives human beings brain power and she expects them to do a good bit of looking out for themselves.

Let us look at a few of these figures!

### Birth Rate Barely Exceeds Death Rate

According to Hall's bulletin, in 1934, there were 257,106 Negro births in the United States (exclusive of stillbirths) and 182,075 deaths, or approximately 141 births per 100 deaths. The narrow margin may readily be noted.

The South seems to have a higher percentage of births than the North. White Americans show a higher rate of increase than the Negro. In 1933, statistics show that for every 100 deaths, there were 155 white births to 143 births of Negroes. Of course there are many, many reasons for all of this.

### Principal Causes of Colored Deaths

The principal causes of colored deaths are listed as follows: tuberculosis, heart disease, pneumonia, diarrhea, enteritis and nephritis. Poor economic conditions, lack of adequate medical facilities, and ignorance of proper child care, and proper dieting may have a deal of bearing on the high death rate.

But what about the high homicide rate? This must not be overlooked. In practically every large Southern city the Negro homicide rate is entirely too high. The law enforcement groups are lax in their handling of such cases; but the better element of Negroes themselves do not concern themselves enough about having these culprits punished properly. These killing scrapes have become so commonplace that the average fellow merely passes them by with a sigh.

### Vehement Seekers of Civil Rights

The Negro should have equal rights with his white neighbor! That is the vehement cry of the majority of Negro politicians and civic leaders.

But here's one equality the Negro ought to have—but who is doing anything about it? Who is getting hot in the collar because the race is not reproducing, because many, so many of the best young families that the race has to offer are bringing forth no children?

### Should Take Care of Family Life

Many of the white institutions of higher learning are putting in courses, compulsory courses, dealing with vital problems of family life. This is a fine thing, and one that needs careful study by Negro educators. One of the things that holds the Jews together the world over is their wholesome family life.

Here are some interesting figures on marital conditions from Mr. Hall's bulletin:

"Of the total Negro male population 15 years old and over, 234 of each 1,000 were single, 305 married, 71 widowed, and 29 divorced. Among the females, 208 of each 1,000 were single, 595 married, 154 widowed and 46 divorced. There were more divorced Negro males and females in Texas than in any other State."

### Figures Don't Lie

"In the year 1900, there were 42 Negro children in Texas under 5 years of age for each 1,000 Negro females 15 to 44 years of age, but in 1930 there were only 373 children, a decrease of 269 children for each 1,000 women during the 30 year period." What about the next 30 years?

### PROTEST TO FARLEY ON TREATMENT OF POSTAL CLERK

New York, July 17.—A second protest to Postmaster General James A. Farley upon the treatment of Marine W. Webb, former employee in the postal service, was sent today by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Webb served thirty-seven years in the post office department and a few months before he was eligible to retire on a pension he was accused of stealing a money order from the mail. He was tried in the United States District Court at Little Rock, Ark., and found not guilty.

Nevertheless, he was discharged from the postal service and denied his pension. He is now an old man and reported to be living on a small relief allowance in the city of Chicago.

When the N. A. A. C. P. wrote Postmaster General Farley in April about the Webb case the department replied that, though the Supreme Court had found Webb not guilty, the department thought he was guilty and so it would take no action for his relief.

The new protest of the N. A. A. C. P., signed by Roy Wilkins, assistant secretary, states: "We are writing to inquire if the post office department means to take the position that the United States courts are not to be observed and that the post office department is an authority greater than the courts of the land. Why have courts?"

The association expresses its grave concern over the security of thousands of postal employees if the post office department adopts a policy of overriding the decisions of the courts. There is some ground for belief that Webb is being persecuted simply because he is colored.

In common with all my countrymen, I look forward to the America that is to be. It should be a nation in which the old wrong things are going out and the new right things are coming in.—Governor Landon.