

But little space remains to devote to the many other excellent papers in this volume. I should like, however, to touch on a few. James Weldon Johnson offers a picture of the growth of the new Harlem, with its economic and cultural achievements and possibilities. Dr. Du Bois is represented by a scholarly account of the American Negro's point of view in regard to the French, German, Belgian, and English colonies in Africa. He points out bitterly that, while the slave trade has ended, these governments find it equally advantageous to exploit their natives in their own land. The condition remains. Elsie Johnson McDougald tells what it means to be a colored woman in the modern business and professional worlds. Walter White describes the psychology arising from race prejudice. He also goes beneath the surface and drags out the fact that this prejudice creates certain internal disagreements among the Negroes themselves. Charles S. Johnson explains why Negroes leave the South: "Enoch Scott was living in Hollywood, Miss., when the white physician and one of the Negro leaders disputed

a small account. The Negro was shot three times in the back and his head battered—all this in front of the high sheriff's office. Enoch says he left because the doctor might some time take a dislike to him." He fills several pages with such incidents.

J. A. Rogers's article about jazz is disappointing and occasionally inaccurate. He has comparatively little to say about the Harlem cabarets—surely among the most interesting features of the Negro's new Mecca—and there should be a great deal more to write about W. C. Handy, the "father of the Blues," Clarence Williams, and other popular composers, but I don't suppose it would be possible to do justice to all sides of the new Negro in one volume.

The bibliography, by no means complete, but certainly the most complete bibliography of the subject available, was compiled by Arthur B. Schomburg, Arthur H. Fauset, and Alain Locke. The volume is bountifully illustrated with reproductions of paintings, many in color, by Winold Reiss, Miguel Covarrubias, and Aaron Douglas, the last a Negro.

H. L. MENCKEN

The Aframerican: New Style (1926)

This book, it seems to me, is a phenomenon of immense significance.* What it represents is the American Negro's final emancipation from his inferiority complex, his bold decision to go it alone. That inferiority complex, until very recently, conditioned all of his thinking, even (and perhaps especially) when he was bellowing most vociferously for his God-given rights. It got into everything that the late Booker Washington ever said or did: the most he could imagine was a Negro almost as good as a white man. It even got into the bitter complainings of the tortured Dr. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois: he seemed to be vastly more intent upon getting Negroes into Pullman cars and Kiwanis than upon finding the Negro soul. Here, at last, it is thrown overboard, without ceremony and

without regret. The Negroes who contribute to this dignified and impressive volume (including Dr. Du Bois himself) have very little to say about their race's wrongs: their attention is all upon its merits. They show no sign of being sorry that they are Negroes; they take a fierce sort of pride in it. For the first time one hears clearly the imposing doctrine that, in more than one way, the Negro is superior to the white man. "Suddenly," says Dr. Locke, the editor, "his mind seems to have slipped from under the tyranny of social intimidation, and to be shaking off the psychology of imitation and implied inferiority."

**The New Negro: An Interpretation* edited by Alain Locke. New York: Albert and Charles Boni.

Well, where is the evidence to support that superb contumacy? I believe that a great deal of it is to be found between the covers of this very book. Go read it attentively if you still think of the black brother as Sambo and his sister as Mandy—or, indeed, if you think of him as Booker Washington. Here a Negro of a quite new sort, male and female, comes upon the scene—a Negro full of an easy grace and not at all flustered by good society. He discusses the problems of his people soberly, shrewdly and without heat. He rehearses their achievement in the arts, and compares it dispassionately to that of the whites. He speculates upon their economic future with no more than a passing glance at the special difficulties which beset them. He makes frank acknowledgment of their weaknesses. He pokes fun at their follies. And all this he accomplishes with good manners and in sound and often eloquent English. Not once is there any intimation that the thing is being done by people of an inferior race—that the world ought to marvel because such people print a book at all. The whole thing is a masterpiece of self-possession. If it had no other merit, it would be notable for that one alone.

As I have said, go read the book. And, having read it, ask yourself the simple question: could you imagine a posse of *white* Southerners doing anything so dignified, so dispassionate, so striking? I don't mean, of course, Southerners who have cast off the Southern tradition: I mean Southerners who are still tenaciously of the South, and profess to speak for it whenever it comes into question. As one who knows the South better than most, and has had contact with most of its intellectuals, real and Confederate, I must say frankly that I can imagine no such thing. Here, indeed, the Negro challenges the white Southerner on a common ground, and beats him hands down. I call to mind some of the leading sub-Potomac masterminds of the

orthodox faculty. Henderson of North Carolina, Gonzalez of South Carolina, old Williams of Mississippi, the editors of the *Atlanta Journal*, the *Richmond News-Leader*, the *Jackson Daily News*, the *Nashville Banner*—and I range them beside Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Walter F. White, Rudolph Fisher, Kelly Miller, and half a dozen other contributors to the present volume. The contrast is pathetic. The Africans are men of sense, learning, and good bearing; the Caucasians are simply romantic wind-jammers, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

How far the gentlemen of dark complexion will get with their independence, now that they have declared it, I don't know. There are serious difficulties in their way. The vast majority of the people of their race are but two or three inches re-moved from gorillas: it will be a sheer impossibility, for a long, long while, to interest them in anything above porkchops and bootleggin. Worse, there is a formidable party of Negro intellectuals which shrinks from going it alone. They have enjoyed, for many years, the patronage of sentimental whites, and they are certainly not likely to cast it off. Nevertheless, I believe that this patronage has done far more to hinder the emerging black than to help him. It has forced him to be tenderly considerate of Caucasian *amour propre*, of all sorts of white prejudices, and so it has hampered his free functioning as his own man. The advanced wing of Negroes, having cut the painter, must be prepared to break their backs at the oars. They will find it lonesome in their little skiff, and often dangerous. They will be tempted more than once to turn back. But no race, I believe, ever gets anywhere so long as it permits itself to think of turning back. It must navigate its own course, in fair weather and foul, and it must see its shallop as a dreadnaught, carrying all arms and ready for any combat. Let us, then, sit back tightly, and observe what the colored brothers do next.