

steamship company, its black god, black madonna, and black Jesus. The third and latest stage is without the servility of the first or the exaggeration of the second. Now the aim is for firmer form and stricter substance, and there has already been attained an objectivity of description and exposition which is novel in Negro art. In the fiction of the new Negro the good characters are no longer always Negroes or the bad characters always whites; they vary with the shift of episode, the science of situation. The imitation and hostility of the first two periods have been swallowed up by the growing objectivity of the third. In Negro sociology the same vicissitudes of thought and sentiment are to be detected. Armstrong and Booker T. Washington, the founders of the schools at Hampton and Tuskegee, with their emphasis upon adaptation, their advocacy of industrial education, their denunciation of resistance, represented the first stage; Burghardt DuBois and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, with their defiant declaration of human rights and their sentimental exaltation of all things black, represented the second stage; while Charles Johnson (editor of *Opportunity*), Alain Locke, and Abram L. Harris, Jr., with their plea for an objective approach to the entire race problem and an equally impartial study of things Negro and white, represent the third stage.

Slavery had bred despair and a yearning for the bright vistas of another world. Without happiness or hope, it had turned the Negro from the real to the ethereal, from the earthly to the Elysian. This other-worldly religiosity, while productive of the exquisite music of the "spirituals," has handicapped the Negro in his progress in this world; and it has infused Negro art and philosophy with a sentimentality from which it rarely has been able to escape. It lingers yet, a vestige that scarcely has begun to wither. The fiction contained in the present volume, for instance, suffers chiefly from the defects of this sentimentality, this inability to create art without melodrama, beauty without crudity. Fisher, Matheus, Hurston, and Nugent, all earnest and sincere craftsmen, are still fettered by amateurish techniques and by styles that stumble instead of flow. The work of Eric Walrond is more advanced. Although superficial in substance, his story is redeemed by diction that glitters if not glows and by a spirit that is fresh if not spontaneous. Jean Toomer, however, is the general of the group. His work transcends in significance and beauty everything that has been produced in Negro fiction. He is the Lafcadio Hearn of Negro literature. In a style as subtle as a dream he has beautified the trivial and ensnared the elusive. And Countee Cullen has well-nigh achieved in poetry what Toomer has achieved in prose. McKay in places is brilliant, and Hughes is often persuasive, but Cullen is in a score of ways their superior. Among the essays those of Charles S. Johnson, M. J. Herskovits, Walter White, and E. Franklin Frazier are most significant.

In the next fifteen years a still newer Negro will be evolved. That Negro, in a still newer book, will leave an even greater record of the increasing genius of his race.

V. F. CALVERTON

W. E. Woodward

Bread and Circuses. By W. E. Woodward. Harper and Brothers. \$2.

MR. WOODWARD is one of those who, having discovered that the world is all wrong, are in the best of all possible positions for enjoying it thoroughly. Both the ancient task of justifying the ways of God to man and that more characteristically modern one of justifying the ways of man to God are sufficiently difficult to disturb the equanimity and ruin the temper of anyone intelligent enough to comprehend the problem, but there is much to be enjoyed by those who can wash their hands of all responsibility for either eternal

justice or the goodness of the human heart. Mr. Woodward's opinion of the qualities which make for success is sufficiently indicated by the title of a book—"The Importance of Being Second Rate"—said to have been written by the hero of the present work, and his opinion of the human species is much like that recommended by the Abbé Coignard when he pointed out the tendency of idealists to hate that chief portion of mankind which does not come up to their ideals; but the result of this disillusion is a great capacity for enjoying the spectacle of life. Thanks to it no good story ever turns bitter in the mouth because, after the way of good stories, its poetic justice is not quite perfect; and no personality ceases to be engaging because its limitations are apparent. There are, it may be remarked, three sorts of serenity to which man may attain. There is the serenity of those who rest in a muddled faith in a "somehow good" and there is the serenity of those from hope and fear set free; but there is a third kind, simple enough to name but oddly difficult of attainment for those born with brains and understanding, which may best be described as a realization that one did not make the world and is not responsible for its defects. Those who achieve the first generally become liberal clergymen; those who achieve the second have generally little to say; but the third is the philosophy of the perfect raconteur, and Mr. Woodward is certainly the best of contemporary raconteurs.

He has looked "business," the central fact of American life, through and through, and he understands thoroughly that combination of luck and greed which goes to the making of the most admired careers. He knows moreover that nothing short of a complete inversion of contemporary standards of value and a complete reorganization of contemporary society can possibly introduce sanity into a mad world; but experience and meditation first transformed the reformer he might have been into a satirist and then, not content with that, softened the satirist into a genial and philosophical commentator. Perhaps because he himself did not realize how complete this process had become his last book, "Lottery," was cast into the form of a satire; but "Bread and Circuses" frankly abandons even the pretense of bitterness and becomes merely the observations of a man who has gradually developed an absorbed but wholly disinterested concern with the strange variety of his fellow-creatures.

The scene is a Connecticut farm resort frequented chiefly by the definitely or the vaguely literary; the structure is as loose as that employed by Peacock or Huxley or Norman Douglas; and the effect is indeed that of a "Chrome Yellow" or a "South Wind" completely American in tone as well as in locale; for there is about it as about these others that touch of extravagance and caricature which is less deliberate distortion than the natural result of the realization that only familiarity keeps us from perceiving that the ordinary is essentially as fantastic as any invention can be. Mr. Woodward, like one of his characters, has been reading "Mole's History of Human Folly"—not in the abridged edition in eighteen volumes with which most people are familiar, but the extended work in forty-two volumes, which contains the colored plates and the appendices; so that his story, for example, of the Lollipop King who owed his millions to the fact that while a street-car conductor he had been impressed by the universal stickiness of children, had searched out the cause of this condition and had, by the invention of the confection which made him famous, succeeded in ameliorating this condition, maintained inward if not outward fidelity to the history of American fortunes. As for "The Importance of Being Second Rate," it is, so he points out, "luminous with optimism," since, though it admits that the world has always been bitter and cruel to talented and sensitive people, it indicates how easy is the practical solution which consists in adapting oneself to the world.