

But old things have passed away and all things have become new. New women are numerous, at least on paper. The New South is a fact; and the new and better conditions there have produced a new and better type of negro womanhood. To be convinced that these new negro women exist one has but to take a flying trip through the South; but to understand their characteristics and their possibilities for good or evil, one must live among them, one must know them in their home life.

They have their place in the New South as their mothers had in the Old. They are Christian where their mothers were only religious; intelligent instead of ignorant; sober-minded instead of jolly (the realization of their responsibilities seems to have crushed out the jollity of their natures); but, like their mothers, they are warmly affectionate, for heart fervency continues to distinguish the Afro-American from the colder and more calculating Anglo Saxon. Imitative also, and, alas, too often imitative of both the vices and virtues of the supposed superior race, they have often imbibed false ideas with regard to their relation to the problem that confronts the negroes; and have desired to educate themselves away from their best racial instincts. But the more intelligent of the new negro women are beginning to think for themselves, are beginning to suit their actions to their conditions, and are striving to become Christian Afro-Americans rather than to spoil good Afro American women in order to become poor imitations of the Anglo-American lady.

"By their fruits ye shall know them," says the sacred Word, and we must judge this new type of womanhood by their work in all the relations of life. Home is peculiarly woman's sphere; and by the homes of these new negro women we must test them. Some are daughters of farmers, but have been trained at one of the many seminaries established by Northern Christians for the improvement of the South. These young women know a more excellent way of living than their mothers knew. That barrier to cleanliness and purity, the one-room log-cabin, ceases to be a possibility where these daughters leave school; and so it gives place to a better house, the foundation of a better home.

These new women of the farmer class set their faces resolutely against the old wasteful system of farming that has kept the people in poverty many years; and so great is the negroes' faith in "book larnin" that their advance is followed, and gradually better methods prevail. These women are the leaven that is to leaven the lump of ignorance, superstition and credulity, that has prevented the progress of the race; and one has but to observe the neat country homes that are beginning to appear, to realize that the leaven has already begun its work.

In the homes of the cities the neatness and taste exhibited prove the presence of intelligent women. Many own their own residences and have earned them by work at the sewing machine, at the sick bed as nurses, and in the school room. Living nearer the centers of education, they are in advance of their country sisters, and many of them are no longer subjects for missionary effort, but are prepared to be missionaries to their less fortunate brothers and sisters.

In the schools for the negroes of the South most of the teachers are colored women. In South Carolina alone, two thousand colored

teachers are employed, an overwhelming majority of whom have obtained their training under Northern teachers. Many of these teachers are new women in the best sense of the term. They read and think for themselves. Their influence is not limited to their pupils or to school duties, but they carry light to dark places, and furnish enlightenment to all kinds of subjects. When the colored people of South Carolina were raising money to test the constitutionality of the registration law, one of the most ignorant townships surprised the committee by sending quite a large sum of money. The negro men of that township had been gathered together and instructed concerning their duties by the young woman who taught the two-months' school of that section. She had read her newspapers to them whenever they had time to listen and had urged them to make some effort to preserve their freedom, and they had done what they could. This is only one of many such instances. These teachers go, from comfortable city homes, to the rude country dwellings, to the open-air school-houses, and there do pioneer work for the redemption of the South.

If we are to judge by their fruits, these new negro women in country and city homes, in schools and in churches, are an improvement on their picturesque, good-natured but ignorant progenitors. They are the saviors of their race. The same unbounded faith in God that carried their mothers through the dark days of slavery, enables them to look beyond the galling conditions in which they are placed, to a brighter future, if not for themselves, for their children. The slave mothers used to hope that the light of freedom would dawn for them, and used to cry in secret to "Massa Jesus" to right their wrongs, until approaching death warned them that their hopes for themselves were all vain; but their faith, undaunted, still went forward for their children.

Their prayers are heard. Their children are free, but are surrounded by conditions as bitter to them as bondage was to their mothers. Yet they, too, have faith in a God of justice. Unlike their mothers, however, they also believe in themselves, and this faith in themselves makes them forget all obstacles in their way to the acquiring of property, and the education of their children. They pray, but they work for the object for which they pray, and to these new negro women the praise is largely due that Southern negroes are moving out of darkness into light.

THE NEW NEGRO WOMAN.

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A very familiar figure in all stories of Southern life is the old negro mauma. Her picturesque bandana, her black face shining with good humor, her loyalty to her master's family, make her interesting to Northern readers who have had no experience with the reality.

To Southern women, reared with the idea that manual labor meant degradation, this old type of negro womanhood was a necessity. The home work and much of the field work of the South was done by negro women who were able to turn their hands to anything; cooking, laundrying, etc., and who in the capacity of nurse endeared themselves to their master's family. They are never portrayed by the novelist as faultless. Indeed, the vices of wastefulness and prevarication seem to have been regarded as inherent; but with all their faults they were not only tolerated but loved, and their presence in Southern life has added charm and piquancy to Southern literature.