

dinal Imperiali at Rome. Ruddiman was succeeded by the most distinguished man who ever served the Faculty as librarian, David Hume. A second volume of the catalog was published in 1776. This supplement was followed by another in 1787 and a third folio in 1807. In 1825 it was resolved to erect the range of buildings extending westwards from the south end of the Parliament House, which the library now occupies, and to dispose of its then quarters in buildings on the south side of Parliament Square to the Society of Writers to the Signet. In 1833 the library was removed to the new buildings. A large extension to the west was completed in 1901, and another extension, including the visitors' Reading Room, now the

public reading room of the National Library, was made when the south wing of the Law Courts was built in 1908. The latest printed catalog, seven large quarto volumes, was completed in 1879 and includes the accessions to the library down to the end of 1871.

The increasing magnitude of the library was the cause of unsuccessful appeals for public support in 1864, in 1869, and again in 1873. At the time of the eventual transfer to the nation the library contained about 750,000 books and pamphlets, not including manuscripts, maps, or music. The unique interest of the collection of manuscripts lies in the number of Scottish MSS., many of which are among the original authorities for the history of the country.

Books and the Negro

By ERNESTINE ROSE

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IN the introduction to the *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* written by himself there is a passage reading as follows:

"Douglass was born a slave, he won his liberty; he is of Negro extraction, and consequently was despised and outraged; he has by his own energy and force of character commanded the respect of the Nation; he was ignorant, he has, against law and by stealth and entirely unaided, educated himself; he was poor, he has by honest toil and industry become rich and independent, so to speak; he, a chattel slave of a hated and cruelly wronged race, in the teeth of American prejudice and in face of nearly every kind of hindrance and draw-back, has come to be one of the foremost orators of the age, with a reputation established on both sides of the Atlantic; a writer of power and elegance of expression; a thinker whose views are potent in controlling and shaping public opinion; a high officer in the National Government; a cultivated gentleman whose virtues as a husband, father and citizen are the highest honor a man can have."

This is an apt epitome of the Negro's progress in America during the last half-century. Douglass' rise was no more meteoric than that of his race has been. But meteoric brilliancy is uncertain and erratic. If the achievements of this great racial group are to obtain for it a permanent and noble prominence in the firmament of the world's history, they must be recorded; authentically, in history, biography and science; imaginatively, in poetry, drama and fiction.

Egypt, Ancient Greece, Imperial Rome still live in the indestructible beauty of their recorded history. If the African has a past of worthy

achievement, as archaeological discoveries increasingly indicate, it has been lost thru lack of records, or their destruction.

Negroes are awaking to a realization of this fact, and gradually, almost imperceptibly, a literature about the Negro, by the Negro, is building itself up. Those who are interested in the race and in race relationships are beginning also to realize the situation, and thru their efforts records are coming to light, are being collected and made available.

One of the centers for such accumulation and adapting of material to public use is, very properly, in the Harlem section of New York which constitutes the greatest Negro city in the world. In the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library there is a research Division of Negro Literature and History, where the library has been able to concentrate one of the best collections of books in America on the Negro and his race.

It is significant that this concentration of racial history is centered in a public library rather than in an agency more limited in its scope, for to a person with an eye for the social significance of modern institutions, the library work done in a great city gathers itself naturally around racial groups. The methods of approach, the community contacts, the very books and the librarians themselves vary somewhat according to the race served. In the New York Public Library books in Yiddish, Russian or Italian are distributed to the branch in corresponding neighborhoods, in each are several assistants speaking the same language or brought up with the same traditions, while the care of the library, its American meaning, its basic book collection, remain the same.

This explains how the 135th Street Branch in the great Negro city of Harlem differs from its fellow branches, and what its special social significance is. There are colored faces, as well as white ones, behind its desk. White as well as colored students work in its reference rooms. Its book collection while based on the same principles and meeting the same needs that exist in other neighborhood groups, contains also many books on the race, history and culture of the African and the Afro-American, historical and current written opinion on race questions, as well as books, old and modern, by Negroes themselves.

But the library has a door open not merely to the past, it leads to the future, thru the channels of intellectual stimulus.

Art exhibitions in which are shown works by Negro artists are held from time to time and young art students are encouraged to bring their work. At the frequent book meetings held in the library for the enjoyment of its patrons, distinguished literary people of both races talk and give opportunity for discussion about books. Among these a prominent place is given to the Negro writer. As public interest, curiosity, and sincere desire for information have grown, there has been an opportunity to disseminate accurate facts, and a growing demand for them by readers. The library has furnished material for articles, theses and books of all sorts. Book lists on the Negro, his history, his achievements and the various phases of the race problem have been compiled and given out to individuals, clubs and study groups, as well as other libraries. This special phase of library service has met with such an eager response, leading in turn to a still greater demand that a special department was developed devoted to research along the lines of Negro literature and history.

This work attracted the attention of the National Urban League, and in turn that of the Carnegie Corporation, thru whose generosity the New York Public Library was enabled to obtain the invaluable collection of Africana and Negro Americana belonging to Mr. Arthur A. Schomburg, a Negro of Porto Rican birth, residing in New York. Mr. Schomburg has been an eager collector for years, and before the sale of his collection to the library had with great generosity loaned a considerable portion of it. In this generosity and public spirit he was not alone. Other generous contributors are Dr. Charles Martin, Dr. Hubert Harrison, Mr. George Young, Miss Louise Latimer and Mrs. John Bruce. These donors are all Negroes who have devoted themselves to the study of their own race.

With the purchase of the Schomburg collection, the Negro research department at 135th Street was organized as the Division of Negro

Literature and History referred to earlier. This collection is for the use of students and is for reference only. It includes books and pamphlets treating historically the innumerable nations and tribes of Africa, treatises on the rare arts and crafts existent among them, textbooks on African dialects, historical literature about the Danish, British, French, Spanish and Portuguese West Indies, original documents dealing with the slave trade, manuscript letters, sermons and addresses of ex-slaves and of Negro and white abolitionists, stories of slave and plantation life, as well as many rare and ancient documents, in Latin, Dutch, French and German, some of them written by Negroes themselves. A sample of the rarities among the Negro Americana is Jupiter Hammon's address to the Negroes of New York, the 1787 edition, including a famous poem by the first American Negro poet: "If we should ever get to Heaven, we shall find nobody to reproach us for being black, or for being slaves." Quite as interesting is a manuscript poem of Phyllis Wheatley, a young Negro poet of the eighteenth century, and a letter to her by George Washington to whom she dedicated a poem. Who knows that Negroes were among the first abolitionists? In this collection are the sermons of Peter Williams and Absalom Jones, rectors of New York, who in 1808 preached daring and eloquent addresses against the slave trade. The student will find the writings of Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell as scholarly and as stirring as those of the more well known publicists and speakers with which they were associated.

Even more stimulating to a receptive mind are some of the rare items of foreign Negro origin, such as the autobiography of Gustavus Vassa exposing conditions up to and prior to 1796 among the slaves in the British colonies. Of keen interest to scholars is the work of Juan Latino, a Spaniard of Negro blood, who held the chair of poetry at the University of Granada, about the middle of the 16th century, and was considered the best Latinist of his day, as well as the Dutch and Latin treatises of Jacobus Capitein, a West African by birth and a graduate of the University of Leyden.

To this invaluable collection are now being added modern contributors to the subject by both white and colored writers. The literary expressions of the young Negro are being caught in books, magazines, clippings and manuscript form, not only for present use but in order to crystallize their fleeting beauty, into the permanency of historical record.

The present is a significant time in the literary life of the Negro. An exhilaration of race expression and quickening of outside interest in the race, are creating a sort of Negro renaissance.

As the library touches this movement, it manifests itself in two ways; first by increasing requests for information on the part of students, both white and colored; second by those seeking to express themselves creatively. Those of the latter group are nearly all young and of Negro blood. The library responds to such queries as how to offer manuscripts, and which editors are most approachable, as well as craft questions as to textbooks on writing, source material, etc. Moreover, the library offers an occasional opportunity of getting before the public, by holding exhibits of the work of Negro artists, and literary evenings where the young poet or short story writer may read from his work, and where distinguished literary people come to speak and meet the young aspirant.

The library auditorium with its simple stage apparatus offers a place for the performances of little theatre groups. Of the two who have used it already, the Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre, was a participant in the 1927 Belasco tournament in which it earned a laurel wreath of praise. The library stage has been used also by the Sekondi Players of Yonkers, a group of young people who make their own stage sets and costumes and paint their own scenes. An important service which the library may render in the slowly growing effort to establish the Negro creative artist in his world, is the quickening of knowledge and interest among colored people themselves both in the past achievements of their own race, and in the work of those creating today. Such efforts are varied in nature and in the class to which the appeal is made. There is a fertile field among the young people. Formal classes or informal groups of boys and girls are taken to visit the Negro collection, examine its treasures and listen to explanatory or descriptive talks.

Birthdays of great Negroes as well as those of other great men and women are noted in the Children's Room. An interesting experiment has been the dramatization of some of Dunbar's poems for a group of children who recited or sang their words with appropriate and often original action. These children are also being taught to sing many of the beautiful spirituals. This is the first step in forming a children's club for the study of folk lore and music.

Lectures on Negro history for older people are given from time to time, and a demand has arisen for a study group on this subject. This work requires special knowledge of the fields covered and to perform it adequately the library calls in the aid of those scholars both Negro and white, who have studied and are glad to impart the results of their study thru channels which will reach a larger number of people.

Of course, the greatest service of the library to the rebirth of Negro interest is in the furnishing of information and bibliographic source material. College students, writers and research workers use the Negro collection constantly for historical and bibliographic information. From libraries, book-shops and students over a wide area come requests for reading lists on a variety of subjects within the racial interest. The library has issued a selected and annotated list of "Books on the Negro," which is undergoing revision at present. Subjects on which other lists are needed are the "Negro and the Stage," plays unpropagandist in character, written by Negroes, stories of Negro life suited to children, Negro folk-lore, Negro women, the Negro's work for the abolition of slavery. When requests come for such lists, they are made up from reference material already used, but all signs point to the need of careful and detailed bibliographic work with accurate and critical annotations.

College students and research workers along historical, anthropological and sociological lines will find here a fertile field when publicity is given to the collection thruout the colleges and university world. The library is still undergoing cataloging, but soon it will be ready for full use. During the next year regular classes will be entertained for lecture and instruction, a club formed for the study of Negro history, and bibliographic assistance for those who wish lists of books on various phases of the subject or advice about individual books.

There is much talk of the Negro problem. It is being settled today by the Negro himself, but he will be helped by getting more and better information about himself. He may be helped, too, by the well-intentioned white world, if it, with him, will inform itself. This is the library's big opportunity for it may help to inform both groups. It has the channels of information and it may find the services, and so do its bit towards the righteous adjustment of America's least understood and most serious social situation.

Harriet E. Howe, executive assistant to the A.L.A. Board of Education for Librarianship, has been appointed associate professor on the faculty of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago. This is the first appointment Dean Works has made. Miss Howe will leave the A.L.A. Headquarters office on November 1 to spend the first year of her appointment at Harvard University working for a higher degree in the Graduate School of Education. With the opening of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago next September, she will have charge of its department for the preparation of teachers in library science.