

NEGRO WOMEN OF TODAY

(By MADELINE R. SMITH)

"By their fruits ye shall know them." These words may fittingly be applied to the courageous Negro woman of today, the Negro woman, who, through difficulties and hardships, is establishing for her self the standard that women of other races possess.

How many of us realize that the Negro woman of yesterday and of today are different, yet not entirely different? The Negro woman of the red kerchief, the family pride who crooned melodies to her master's children, is no more. She went with the age of our grandmothers. Occasionally she is to be found in some old family, tucked away as a family heirloom, but never in full glory as in days of old. Not entirely different, I have said, is the Negro woman of today, for she still has the same bigness of heart, the same faithfulness to duties, and, above all, the love of justice toward her fellow-people.

Who is the daughter of the Negro woman now to us only a faint memory? The quiet, dignified woman who is working socially, politically, and educationally for the upbuilding of the Negro race. She is to be found in all the thinking, serious-minded women of the race. She is helping to solve the big problems confronting all Americans.

I dare say there are many of our white friends who are not acquainted with this new Negro woman. After a conference of Southern white and colored women, held especially to discuss race relations, a white woman writes thus: "I have studied and worked and hoped to be of some little value. I realize the wrong conditions, but to feel that they are embedded in a system which encases you is to feel impotent . . . The only recourse is to hold fast to ideals . . . The Negro women have great ideals and sane plans, and the conference gave me a clue and a point of contact." These statements show that white women are just finding out the true qualities of the Negro woman.

Today men are asking, "Is the Negro woman in industry?" The answer is "Yes, and she will remain in industry as long as the deal is fair." She is to be found doing the same

kind of work the white woman is doing. It is true she is handicapped in many instances, but she is still persistent. During the World War, her reputation as a worker was established. In many instances she was found to do work equally as well as, and in some instances better than, the white woman.

How many of us know who the champion mail sorter of the United States is today? It is not a white man or a white woman, but a Negro woman, Miss Lulu Cargill. She beat the record of Miss Nina Holmes, of Detroit, who distributed 20,610 letters in an eight-hour test.

What does the name of Mrs. C. J. Walker bring to the mind? It brings the picture of a Negro girl bending over a wash tub, a girl who, while toiling for her daily bread, saw a vision and worked to make that vision real. Later it brings a picture of a successful business woman of wealth and social position, one of the greatest philanthropists our race has ever had.

There is another Negro woman in the business world whom we should not fail to mention. Mrs. Maggie L. Walker, of Richmond, Va., holds the distinction of being the first and only Negro woman president of a bank. In spite of traditional and present-day handicaps, surely the Negro woman can rightfully claim a place in the business world.

The Negro woman is showing her ability also along musical, social, professional, educational, and literary lines. Madame Emma Azalia Hackley was one of the greatest teachers of vocal music our race has ever possessed. Besides conducting song festivals throughout the country with masses of our own people, stimulating interest in their own songs and helping to get better tone effects, she has inspired many of the most talented of our race, including Mr. Clarence Cameron White, the eminent composer and violinist, and Mr. Carl R. Ditt, the composer and pianist. We are indebted to her for the coming to Hampton of our own Mr. R. Nathaniel Dett. To Madame Hackley our race owes a debt of gratitude for unselfish devotion to the development of talent in the race.