

can follow for Chicago. And in both of these cities that even more radical experiment should be tried of letting Negro workers who are most in need, get into some of these homes.

THE appearance of the *New Negro* edited by Alain Locke has drawn out many attitudes from critics who, in their variety, reflect much of the new sentiment of the American public on the Negro, who is changing his skin before their very eyes. There is, generally, the recognition of a new spirit of confidence among Negroes; of the shunting off of the usual weird fabrications of ancestry as aids to prestige; and recognition of the concern of the Negroes with their own problems and materials. The book, indeed, reveals a firm grasp of these questions—a certain notable facility of expression and a distinct overtone of agreement on racial objectives. It has commanded the best reviewers, who have not failed to sense its epochal significance in Negro life.

Oswald Garrison Villard in the *Saturday Review of Literature* regards the book as "a milestone marking the exact distance the race has travelled since Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*," and feels that these new writers contribute color, more warmth and music to our national life; create their own mold, "bow down to no Gessler hat of alleged race supremacy and ask favors of nobody." But Ernest Boyd, in the *Independent* was "as far removed as ever from enthusiasm" after reading the book, explaining that "If I had supposed that all Negroes were illiterate brutes, I might be astonished to discover that they can write good third rate poetry, readable and unreadable magazine fiction, and that their real estate in Harlem is anything but dilapidated slum property." Howard W. Odum in the *Modern Quarterly* finds a "new self discovery on the part of the Negro"—which means change in the Negro, in the relations he is to assume, in the attitude of other races, and in governmental relationships. Jim Tully in the *International Book Review* regards the book as a "direct challenge to the young white writers of the nation." V. F. Calverton offers what amounts to a sociological interpretation and envisages three stages of progress: the passionate imitation of the culture of the white race as the first, revolution in attitude marked by protest and melodramatic sentimentality as the second, and objectivity and analysis as the third. Carl Van Vechten in *Books* commends the fiction and poetry to those who are cognizant only in a vague way of what Negro youth are doing. He gives a critical appraisal of nearly all contributions, agreeing and dissenting with a fine taste and with considerable familiarity with recent Negro literature. Herbert J. Seligman in the *New York Sun* thinks the claims of the Negroes are immoderate and Mary White Ovington in *The Bookman* concludes that "the new Negro bears little likeness to the colored man who is portrayed today on the stage and in the white man's fiction, the verbose,

good natured Cohen-Cobb variety", but is "very much like his white neighbor" with a touch which is "just different enough to give us deep pleasure." H. L. Mencken in the *American Mercury* sees Negroes shedding their servile complex, notes a hearty growth, a quality of writing that could not be equalled in a similar group south of the Mason and Dixon Line, and suggests that they rid themselves of the clumsy baggage of their sentimental white patrons. Edith J. R. Isaacs in the *World Tomorrow*, quoting Mr. Locke's assertion that "something has happened beyond the watch and guard of statistics," reflects that something has happened, temporarily at least, beyond even the finer measuring rod of understanding. For nobody, not even the Negro himself, knows exactly how great and how fundamental a thing it was that happened when, in their efforts to find a solution for their race problem, the Negroes began a sudden inturning and found their spiritual freedom within themselves."

The movement as expressed in the volume prompts Carl Van Doren in the *Century* to one of the most illuminating appraisals of the entire series. He views Negroes as a tenth part of the population, handicapped but nevertheless "touched by the gospel of progress which the other nine-tenths swore by"; whose work does not suffer by comparison with that of white Americans at a period when the population was about the same as Negroes, and conditions were similar. The fiction does not equal the best of Irving and Copper, the verse is higher in workmanship and poetic quality, and the prose discussions "put to shame the vexed and feverish provincialism with which Americans argued their case against Europe."

Some of the surprise and praise of the book is excessive just as some of bored insouciance to it is affected. But throughout runs a current of firm, unpatronizing evaluation which can distinguish between an evolved stage and a fad; between, let us say, *Go Down Moses* and *The Memphis Blues*.

IT was at an informal OPPORTUNITY dinner celebrating the appearance of *The New Negro*, that the probability of stimulating Negro writers to the more sustained prose effort of a novel by a substantial prize offer, was first seriously discussed. The idea grew and the publishing house of A. & C. Boni has announced its offer of \$1,000 for a novel of Negro life written by a person of Negro descent. It is an opportunity not to be lightly ignored, and a literary business man's blunt request that Negro writers who have complained of the absence of incentive, give evidence of what they can do. Formal announcement of this offer was carried in this journal last month. More particulars concerning it may be secured by writing to the publishers at 68 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

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Patron:

Journal Title: Opportunity.

Volume: 4 **Issue:** 40

Month/Year: Apr 1 1926**Pages:** 113

Article Author:

Article Title: Welcoming the New Negro

Imprint: New York City : Department of Research
and Investigations, National Urban League, [1923]-
Sept. 1928- : New York City : National Urban
League

ILL Number: 194309450



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