

# When Negroes Are Black No More

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for the Knights of Nordica to hate. Strangely enough, his paradoxical task is to persecute his ex-race.

Fisher's only serious love is for his beautiful but stupid white wife. He does not wish to lose her, consequently he is very much perplexed when he finds she is pregnant. Fortunately, for him she has a miscarriage and he is saved the undoubtedly fatal embarrassment of exposure at this stage of the story. He knew that the child would probably reveal his Negro identity and he found no way to surreptitiously persuade his wife to a Crookman lying-in hospital.

But Fisher's troubles are not

ended, for Mrs. Fisher is with child a second time." In this time there have been so many developments in the plot that Fisher is saved by a singular melodramatic turn of the story and not by the lucky machinations of sacrosanct mother nature as in the first difficulty. The story centers about Fisher and becomes intensely interesting and not a little complicated by the author's clever treatment of his characters and plot.

The really amusing ending consists of the discovery that, after all the Negroes are turned white, they are whiter than the former so-called white people, so that there is a mad rush to become colored again. Ironically, the darkest people are considered the real white people. Ridiculous legislation similar to the present "Jim Crow" laws springs up, based on the new and more absurd color differentiations.

Perhaps the most sensational appeal of the book is the ludicrous manner in which the author has caricatured certain prominent Negroes. The identities of Dr. Shakespeare Agamemnon Beard, Claude Spelling, Col. Mortimer Roberts, Dr. Joseph Bonds, Rev. Herbert Gronne and Santop Licorice are well known to the most ordinary persons. The originals are so easily recognizable that Mr. Schuyler might as well have used their real names as indeed he almost did in the case of Mr. Walter Williams.

"Black No More" is written with

an entirely original style, both in respect to gusto and method of approach to a proverbial and hackneyed subject matter. Very few Negro writers have used the imaginative style as has George S. Schuyler. And it is now being recognized that in the field of caustic satire, Mr. Schuyler reigns supreme among the Negro writers.

Many justifiable reasons for his enviable place are evident in "Black No More." The devastating accusations of his irony, innumerable times manifested in his essays, find their greatest effectiveness in this, his first, sustained effort. They are thinly veiled under the most gorgous and hilarious comedy.

The implications involved in the irrational willingness of Southern whites to be led by such preposterous and pernicious organizations as the Knights of Nordica will at first cause laughter, but to those who see beneath the thick crust of humor the laughter will subside into mingled pity and contempt for any mass of people whose intellectual growth must have been arrested at the puerile age of twelve or thirteen years. And any reader failing to grasp the meaning of this and other equally deep thrusts of "Black No More" does not comprehend the full purport of the book.

After the rich, lusty humor comes a still but nevertheless keen realization that Mr. Schuyler intended to show the pathological failings in the psychology of both the white and black peoples.

Perhaps plausible objections may be made to the extremely vigorous

manner in which the author piled on the slapstick comedy. It is the legitimate prerogative of the artist or literateur to exaggerate for effect, but it is highly questionable whether much of the humor in "Black No More" was not too far-fetched—too thickly applied—particularly the ridiculous buffoons made of the Negro leaders.

But this objection is exceedingly tenuous. In the first place such is the business of satire; in the second place, it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the quantity of humbuggery and quackery that surrounds the charlatany of Negro leadership. Moreover when one seriously and carefully considers to what inconsistencies and incongruities race prejudice has carried American habits and customs, one realizes the futility of regarding the situation as one of explainable reactions and conduct. When Negro women are almost invariably secured to care for white infants by their parents, when they handle the victuals of white people, when they even feed white infants from their breasts, can one but guffaw at such absurd notions as the refusal of the same white parents to sit beside the same Negro women in public conveyances, or eat at the same table with them?

It is foolish to attempt to rationalize such prejudices, while on the contrary a vast amount of enjoyment can be obtained by subsuming such behaviour with the rest of the laughable human insanities and forthwith abandoning

the task of morbid brooding to fanaticism.

It is true that "Black No More" is not outstandingly subtle, but that is not the forte of Mr. Schuyler. His style is the robust, unanswerable

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