

Turning Pages

By LILLIAN S. WATTY

Last week I spoke of the scarcity of literature for and about colored children. Meanwhile the announcement is made that Mary White Ovington's "Zee" (Harcourt, Brace and Company, \$2.00), was released August 27. The book not only supplies a volume for the emptiest of our bookshelves of racial literature for children, but is quite an entertaining tale, particularly suitable for boys between the ages of ten and fourteen.

The book is the story of Ezekiel Lee, who leaves his home for the first time to study at Tolliver Institute, which is obviously a fictional Tuskegee. The theme is a simple boyhood story but the charm of the imaginative naive little character about which it is written, will remain long after it has been read.

Among the other characters is Natu, an African, who, much older than his companions at the school imparts much native lore and philosophy to them. His tragic death makes a poignant chapter. His plaint, upon seeing some natives shown in a moving picture on Africa, "They get the ugliest people they can find and the stupidest. It isn't fair," echoes an oft-repeated charge made in America.

A bit of philosophy, which ought to make us stop and think a bit, expressed by a sage young African, is this:

"In Africa we worship our mothers. We have not so many things there to love as you have here and so we have plenty of love for our people."

"At home we love what God has made. Here you love what the factories turn out, a thousand at a time."

A volume that seems intensely interesting both from its name and a brief comment seen about it, but which I have not been fortunate

enough to peep into as yet, is "Four Handsome Negresses," by R. Hernekin Baptist (Cope and Smith).

A comment in one of the monthlies, Harper's, I believe, but am not quite sure, states that it is propaganda for week and ill-used African blacks. The story, so it says, opens with four African women of naive simplicity, as a Portuguese ship laden with white men who mouth pious phrases, upon their landing, seize the women, ostensibly to make them emissaries to spread Christian doctrine. I nearly said faith, but of course, faith has no part in such proceedings, obviously.

No indication of the denouement is given by the commentator, who does add, however, that it places the whites in the worst light, and that the author is full of irony and has ability to invent a tale. By the way, the story is invented from an old nautical account. All of which only goes to whet my curiosity.

What sort of book, I am asking, is it that seems to have slightly riled the reviewer, and seems to have pinched the foot of the superior Nordic? Did the shoe accidentally get on the other foot? To the very immoral moralists of our sister race, may I say that, colored authors have been complaining about that "worst light" business for a long time. It ought to be refreshing to you, little unique, don't you know?

A personal experience prize contest in Scribner's Magazine, based on observation and experience concerned with aspects of American life goes by the title, "Life in the United States," and contains several illuminating accounts, selected from more than 3,000 manuscripts.

Frances W. Prentice writes graphically of an "Oklahoma Race Riot." You get a realistic picture of the horrors of mob vengeance. The picture is the more effective because it is devoid of comment. You may get a little sick at the pit of the stomach at the brutality of shooting down men who, driven by the force of twenty or thirty years of habitual promptness, start bravely forth to their jobs after a hectic and fearful night.

A plain, unvarnished account, giving a sequence of horror and terror-filled events during the riot, tells as only a resident and eye-witness can, the waste of emotional and physical energy, property, and human life, that such an orgy produces, not to speak of the devastation of peace and order, which years afterward can never be fully restored. This is an article that should be widely read by white and colored readers.

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Peeping into the Underworld of Baltimore

By LEVI H. JOLLEY

Inquiry into the illicit liquor trade in Baltimore reveals that the wholesale and retail prices of the beverages have decreased in the past six months. Most of these prices have been cut, it was learned, as a result of the decrease in patronage.

A survey of several of the larger liquor stores shows that the supposed white gin which formerly was sold at \$3.00 a gallon now can be purchased for \$2.00, while the colored beverage, commonly spoken of as whiskey, which brought \$3.50 a gallon, can be obtained for a dollar less.

The corn liquor, which is known through the drinking circles as "mule," sells for \$1.75 a gallon, which is seventy-five cents less than the former sale price.

Many of the manufacturers and dispensers of the liquor state that this reduction in price was necessary to maintain their clientele during the depression. It is reported from various sources that several of the larger manufacturers have discontinued producing the grade of liquor that they formerly sold to bring fifty cents a half pint at retail, but are now selling a liquid known as "smoke," which can be produced so cheaply because of the inferior ingredients, that a half pint can be sold for fifteen cents.

In various districts scattered throughout the city where the depression is mostly felt by the laborer, the effects of this inferior and poisoning drink can be seen in the faces of those who drink it. The liquid causes the drinker, after constant use, to resemble a person who is a drug addict. This is most noticeable in the eyes and in the reaction on the nervous system.

In production of this mind-warping, nerve-wrecking liquid, plain wood alcohol is used as the basic ingredient.

The wood alcohol is placed in a huge container and heated. As a result of this treatment, a film forms on the top. This is skimmed off. A "pill" known as "tranterun," which causes a chemical reaction and is supposed to remove the poison from the fluid, is added. At the same time the whites of eggs are mixed with the liquor. This is said to be a preventative of alcoholic poisoning. The maker uses the whites of three eggs to a gallon.

The fluid, which during this procedure has been over a heat, is then allowed to heat to about 100 degrees—a common thermometer being placed in the pot at intervals to determine the degree. When it has reached the right point, the liquor is dipped out and bottled. The bottles are then placed in a dry place and allowed to cool. (Sometimes the producer allows the "smoke" to be sold while still warm.)

The bottled liquid, when uncorked, gives off a nauseating odor and a white vapor, which resembles smoke and from which it derives its name.

Two drinks, and the person who has been foolish enough to take the stuff into his system appears to have been drugged. Five drinks at once, and there is a funeral.

Recently officials of the health department conducted an investigation into the effects of this liquor. The probe was instituted following the illness of a white man whose skin had virtually been cooked from drinking the liquor. During this investigation it was discovered that the fluid not only will make the skin appear as though it was toasted but will oftentimes cause large sores to break out over the body.

Another reaction, as previously stated, is a film comes over the eyes and gives a cloudy, deadened tint to the eye ball and causes the pupil to dilate.

Speaking of liquor brings to mind the enforcement officers whose duty it is to keep the country dry. These men are hand-picked and have been found to be true and not wanting. But with the scores of handicaps and legal technicalities which the violator can use to his advantage, the job has been found to be one that is not as pleasing as one would suspect.

The local dry force for this district totals thirty-nine men. There are two colored agents in this group; namely, Eugene Jackson and Harold Maxwell. Both are rated as being efficient workers. The devastating result of their work has been felt keenly by hundreds of white and colored bootleggers. The efficiency of their work can be vouched for by several distillers, cabaret owners, and small joint owners.

Incidentally, both of these young men are of the same type, being quiet, keen observers and immaculate dressers.

Jackson, who formerly was a school instructor, is a book worm, having a hobby for reading, not only things of a heavy vein but the light novels.

Maxwell, had he turned to the ring, would probably be perched upon one of the championship stools. As a boxer he is fast, accurate and clear.

SIFTING THE NEWS

By RALPH MATTHEWS

LOVE CAME LATE, BUT IT CAME

A lesson for young puppy love addicts who think that the world has come to an end when they have a love spat and swear they will never love again is seen in the experience of Mrs. Annie M. Cornish, of Greenwood, Del. Although she has weathered 77 summers, seen the world at its worst and its best. She still believes in human nature. Well past her allotted three score and ten years Mrs. Cornish still has faith in old Dan Cupid, listened to the songs of love sung by 89-year-old Civil War veteran Isaac Henry Dredden, and they were married last week.

Another lesson is taught by the case of Mrs. Cornish. Her picture appearing in the AFRO so appealed to her husband that he fell in love with it, proving that a beautiful life is radiated in beautiful face even in old age. Mrs. Cornish was a beautiful girl and remained so through life because she did not abuse the gift that nature gave her, in riotous living.

Quite different is this case from the one of the aged couple who courted for a quarter of a century until the woman grew impatient and said, "John, don't you think it is time we were getting married?"

"Why, yes," said the procrastinating lover, "but who would want either of us now?"

LODGES DEFY DEPRESSION

Howard University's Emmett J. Scott, writing to President Hoover, who has just appointed an unemployment commission, said: "There are some twelve million colored people in the United States, and from the standpoint of unemployment, they probably feel the pressure throughout the North and South sooner than other groups."

Dr. Scott is undoubtedly right but he has little support in his argument when President Hoover can pick up copies of the papers and see in one week where 30,000 colored Elks from all over the nation spent twice as many thousand dollars going to Philadelphia to parade. And also read where 1,300 noses were counted in Boston, Massachusetts, where the Knights of Pythias are in session.

THE DEAD DID NOT RISE

Loyal followers watched in vain at the tomb of Elder Warren Robinson, self-styled "God," who promised to rise from the dead after sixty days. The Elder failed to keep his promise and those who were members of his nation wide cult are disappointed.

Many are wondering whether the "god" did not give himself too much time. Christ said he would rise after three days and kept his promise. Elder Robinson gave death long enough to get a firm grip on him.

This should be a lesson to future self-styled gods who pop up all over the country, suck a bountiful living from gullible religious fanatics. They should make their resurrection arrangements simpler.

AFRICANS SAY:

"Africans have much in common with us as wit and wisdom expressed in their proverbs show. It is time for us to get away from the notion that they are in an inferior and barbaric state. In more than one sense, we Americans are less civilized and more barbaric than they."

C. J. BENDIS

Beauty Hints

Beauty Sleep

Just before you sleep be sure that your mind is tranquil, that you are serene and ready for the Land of Nod. It is quite as necessary to beauty that there should be no mental frowns to disturb the calmness of your features as that your physical face should be calm.

A good way to bring the mind to stillness is to read something that interests but does not agitate you. Let the mind drift! Perhaps a short story for some, with others the newspaper is sufficient, but by all means bring the mind away from your own daily cares and set it adrift on the affairs of some tangible someone.

Thus you gain a mental serenity and your forehead loses that ruffled look called the frown.

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