

AN EPOCH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RACE.

TWO BOOKS—"DESSALINES"—"A VOICE FROM THE SOUTH."

NOT A FICTIONIST DRAMA.

A BYSTANDER'S NOTES.

*The Chicago Inter-Ocean.*

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The former is a drama by a colored man, William E. Easton, (Galveston, Tex; the other a volume of essays by Anna Julia Cooper, a colored woman of Xenia, Ohio.

Any one who wishes to study at first hand the most important element of the race problem in America, to-wit: the relation of the best products of the race itself to this great problem, cannot do better than to order these two books. The Bystander does not know the price of either of them, but would judge from the general make up that it would be about \$1 each.

The first thing that will impress the cultured reader of these books will be the general tastefulness and accuracy of the works themselves, and the next will be the accuracy and finish of the literary style of the authors. Not only is there nothing loud or garish about these books, but there is to be found through them both an indescribable charm of finish and verbal exactitude rarely excelled in the work of contemporary writers. The habit of a lifetime has made the Bystander's pencil almost infallible in its indication of verbal inaccuracy, which is, after all, the very highest test of literary merit. The word which exactly fills the place where it is used—is neither too large nor too small for the service assigned or the thought it is commissioned to convey—is to literary workmanship what the perfect note is to music. It may be slurred a little, often is without constituting actual fault, as the rush of some great movement may even bide or excuse a false note now and then, but only precision can give the feeling of finish which attests the genuine literary artist.

Rarely has the unsparing pencil passed so lightly over the pages of a book of essays as it did over the pages of this "Voice from the South," which yet has nothing of the South in it, except a bit more of vivacity and a little more evident desire to please, than the asperity of Northern culture usually permits, or at least encourages, in its feminine devotees.

"Dessalines" has a touch of Creole sentiment, and one finds occasionally in its words and phrases a flavor of French significance, no doubt unconscious to the author and not all ungrateful to one familiar with its origin. These, however, are very rare and not so pronounced as even to attract the attention of most readers. It, too, is singularly simple, clear and correct in its verbal quality. Both books impress one with a sense of neatness, care and unpretentious thoroughness, pleasing in any writer, and especially gratifying to note in the work of authors whose mental inheritance has not been one of painstaking care—members of a race not yet generally freed from the trammels of restricted opportunity and imperfect diction. It will, perhaps, come with something like a sense of unpleasant surprise to some cultured men and women who may read this book that there are persons of this race who need not even the artifice of what is termed "dialect" to place them on a high level in that elegance of simplicity which marks the best use of our English tongue.

Both of these books are not only by colored writers but both proceed from the same *motif*—the relation of the colored race to Caucasian humanity and Christian civilization in the new world.

"Dessalines" is "a dramatic tale," based on the great Haytian struggle for liberty in which the arrogance of the old *regime* of France joined hands with the savagery of the *Sans Culottes* and the Creole hatred of the slave, to overawe and overpower those whom only the love of freedom made invincible. The hero of the tale is Dessalines, the black and indomitable lieutenant of Toussaint L. Overture. The action of the play is direct and strong; its language simple, chaste and temperate—sometimes startling in its graphic plainness, but wholly without rant, and

when the character of its *motif* is taken into account, showing a remarkable self-restraint and no slight degree of literary art.

The "Voice from the South, on the other hand, is a cultivated woman's view of the gulf which is set between white Christian man and womanhood and souls enmeshed in darker-hued integuments. It is not profound, and there is in it a somewhat too abundant use of second-hand material and a little parade of quotation. But that is the fashion of the times; the borrowed matter is always good, is aptly used in the main, and shows breadth of reading, keen observation, and thoroughly good taste in selection. But this half-fault is soon forgotten by the reader as he comes to note the deft but stinging satire, and keen but no ill-tempered wit, of the colored woman whose tactful self-restraint avouches her a colored lady. Its perusal would be a new sensation to many a white-souled Christian woman of the "superior race, who, when she had perused its bright pages from cover to cover, would be forced to admit that, though she had encountered many a sharp thrust, she had not received one awkward or ill-tempered blow.

Defects the book may have. It is not so simple in purpose or profound in feeling as the man's work with which it is compared. There is an evident preparation and sometimes a little straining for effect; but few female writers have shown a daintier wit, and few works, especially upon such a difficult subject, give promise of a finer literary art.

The Bystander has given this unusual prominence to these two books because they seem to mark a distinctly new departure in the literary production and intellectual quality of the race.

Aside from newspaper articles, some controversial pamphlets, volumes of sermons and speeches, the colored people of the United States can scarcely be said to have produced any literature. This is not surprising nor at all discreditable to them. The best scion grafted on the strongest stock, requires some period of growth before it produces fruit, and a race by law barred from the fields of literature for two centuries, need at least the lifetime of a generation in which to produce good literary work. The wonder is not that it came so late but that it came so soon, and is of such simple, genuine quality. Except Mr. Chestnut, whose brief novels were something marvelous in their unpretentious realism, of which there are no more because prosperity in other fields has smothered his rare gift, hardly any colored writer has made a serious attempt in the realm of fiction, and not one has ventured upon good-tempered, keen, yet kindly, discussion of present conditions with any specific attempt at literary excellence. These books are practically the first fruits of literary culture of the American negro. That there are not more is due in part to various causes. A generation moves with doubt and hesitancy along a road which none of their ancestors have trod. Politics, religion, and especially the daily struggle for existence have absorbed an unusual proportion of the race's energy. The actors in such intensely dramatic scenes as have marked the days of freedom of these new people have rarely power to give expression to its pathos. The slave romance has yet to be written by the slave descended, if indeed any pen can ever depict its lights and shadows. But the great feat of first endeavor will not be the story of slavery, but the tale of half-freedom. The great opportunity which waits the pen of the colored novelist is not the plantation of yesterday, but the plantation of to-day. The literature which the colored man should strive to create should be along the line of these two books—the literature of colored life in juxtaposition with the Christian civilization of to-day—the literature not of argument, nor of protest, but of aspiration and truth. Is the Hugo born, who will give the world the romance of the tenant's or the cropper's life so truly as to stir the world to justice?

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## NEGRO LITERATURE.

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### WITH SAUCERLESS CUPS

An idea involved by an ingenious woman whose dainty tea table set lost both its saucers, was to tie the two matching cups together with a bow of fancy ribbon and convert them to a service of used and unused matches.

## IN NEGRO HOME LIFE

### LIES THE SECRET OF THE RACE'S DECLINE—THE MARRIAGE.

RELATION TOO LIGHTLY ENTERED INTO AND TOO EARLY BROKEN—LOOSE MORAL NOTIONS—THE OFF-SPRING.

The typical home of the Negro in the South today is the single room cabin—at most two rooms. It is poorly built, with no conveniences save a rude hearth, on which, with the rudest pots, the cooking is done, and yet there is some cheerfulness with it all. Newspapers you will find pinned up over the walls if they contain pictures, and all sorts of cheap prints, with pictures of Abraham Lincoln and General Grant. With all the bareness of these poor cabins, writes Rev. Thomas Dixon, Jr., in the New York Herald, the poorest are rich in comparison with the poor of the great cities of the North. They never starve; they never freeze; they are never seriously hungry.

I read the statement of a distinguished Northerner who passed through the South, that he saw many cabins in which the Negroes lived in the utmost squalor and want, and slept on beds of straw. This may be a fact in certain sections of the South which I have not seen. I never knew a Negro to have to sleep on a pile of straw except when he slept in the barn from choice, having some dark design upon that barnyard enclosure. I will give any man the whole South, from the James to the Rio Grande, for his territory, and I will take the single city of New York alone for my territory, and for every Negro he will find me in the South sleeping on a pile of straw, I will find two white men in New York City who have got no straw—who sleep on boards, who sleep on floors, in cellars, in halls in alleyways, who sleep standing up and have to move on at that.

The conditions of social and family life among the Negroes of the South today is most deplorable. Bastardy is the rule, not the exception, except in certain quarters where institutions of learning have been established under Christian auspices, and a race pride has been emphasized and cultivated.

Separations and divorces are so common among the Negroes of the South as to cause little interest or comment. Divorces are formalities with which they usually dispense. They "separate." And then one of the separated parties migrates and marries again. Even the old fashioned Negroes, so kind in their disposition, so sterling in their honesty in other things, often break down here. Their home life is too often a shame and a scandal. Here we touch one of the secrets of their failure as a race. During the past ten years the census shows that the white race has increased 27 per cent; the Negro race 13 per cent. The Negro race, of course, suffers in the competition in the economic world. While they do not die from starvation, many of them die from insufficient clothing and constant exposure to changes of atmosphere, which produces consumption and pneumonia. Consumption especially has made terrible ravages among the Negroes of the South since the war, and it is due principally to their lack of care of themselves.

One of the sad features of the home life of the Negro is the miserable character of the children that are turned out from the average home, even when it stands for a considerable period of time. These children refuse to work on the farm, as a rule crowd into the alleys and poor quarters of the city, there to become loafers and criminals, and so often summon the old father and mother to meet them at the bar rail of the criminal court, or on the step of the gallows.

Yet, such is the nature of the Negro that, with all his poverty, his ignorance and his humble surroundings, he is, perhaps, as happy and contented a man as can be found in America in the mental walks of life. His disposition is optimistic to the verge of insanity. His character is jolly, and he does not grow thin worrying about the burden of tomorrow. So long as he has something to eat today, he seems to be happy. When they grow dissatisfied they migrate in large numbers. This disposition primarily arises from insufficient food and lack of work, produced by overcrowding in certain quarters, and yet, in the most crowded districts of the South, there is always a dearth of domestic laborers.

The Negro cook in the South is an independent personage, compared with which the Bridget of the Northern kitchen is a slave of the humblest degree. The Negro servant of the new generation of the South leaves without even notice. They work, as a rule, a few weeks, and then quit.—Memphis Scimitar.

## PAINT AND POWDER.

Why Women Use Them and the Effect That They Produce.

There is no use talking, women do use paint and powder, and the only thing to do is to accept the fact and learn, if possible, the cause, says the Philadelphia Times. It is not confined to the passe dame who stretches out her withered hands after anything that will give her even a semblance of the youth that vanished so long ago, but young girls and pretty matrons with complexions that need no artificial enhancing are just as much addicted to the use of rouge and the powder puff as the elderly example, for whom there is some excuse.

To ask one whose cheeks bear rosy evidence against her, "why she does it," will bring no satisfaction, as there has never yet been known a woman willing to acknowledge that any portion of her make-up is false. Therefore, one must draw their own conclusions and reason out the matter for themselves.

Rouge is used most undoubtedly for the sake of winning the admiration of the opposite sex, and there is hardly a man who really admires the pallor of the lady in preference to the glowing tints of the rose, and many masculines candidly admit when questioned on the subject: "Oh, we don't mind, so long as it is done artistically."

Ah, there's the rub, or rather too much of the rub, for so few women outside of beauty doctors and those having maids, realize how much they get on, causing the very marked difference between their face and their neck, which is certain to call attention to the dabbling done by the unskillful hand.

Powder is as much of a part of a woman's toilet as her soap or her tooth brush is. It is not used to deceive anybody, but takes the shine off in warm weather, and at all seasons of the year gives that sweet and feminine finishing touch that has no more harm in it than when a mother uses the puff on her baby's soft skin after the bath.

### Abuse of Cocaine.

Almost everything that is of use to man is capable of abuse, says the Youth's Companion. This is especially true of stimulants and sedatives. These drugs, in their elementary state, are generally violent poisons. Even tea and coffee are not exceptions to the rule. The abuse of such things consists in using them too much, or for improper purposes. Nature meant them for medicines, and used intelligently and carefully as such, they are among her best gifts to the afflicted.

Cocaine, obtained from the elementary principle of coca leaves is exceedingly valuable in minor surgical operations as a substitute for ether and chloroform; but already it is becoming fearfully abused. According to the London Lancet, approving a paper on the subject in the Journal of Mental Science, its special dangers are these: It is treacherous; it produces an early break-down, both morally and intellectually; it is intensely poisonous and speedily causes destructive tissue changes.

In chronic cocaine poisoning, general wasting appears early and develops with extreme rapidity. Convulsions also are not uncommon. In animals it is found to produce degeneration in the cells of the medulla and spinal chord, and also in the nerve cells of the heart ganglia and in the cerebral cells.

The great danger of cocaine lies in the fact that it is the most agreeable and abiding of all narcotics. It causes no mental confusion, only a little more thoughtfulness than usual. There is no headache or nausea, and the pleasant effects are produced with a comparatively small dose; but symptoms of poisoning are rapidly developed, and within three months of the commencement of the habit there may be marked indications of degeneration, loss of memory, hallucinations and suspicious.

The author of the paper in the Journal of Mental Science says that much harm has resulted from a recent tendency to use cocaine to break off the opium habit, and from a mistaken notion that this drug can be employed safely and advantageously for that purpose. The writer adds that cocaine is more insidious than morphine, fastens more readily upon its victim, and holds him in at least as tight a grasp.

### Wanted to be Sure.

The land lady was chopping up the turkey in the kitchen preparatory to distributing it around the table.

"Now, gentlemen," she said, sticking her head in the door and addressing a long table of hungry expectants, "what part of the turkey will you have?"

"Neck," spoke up the old boarder promptly.

"Why," she said in surprise, "that is not a chicken part."

"Possibly not, he grunted, "but I'm a good deal surer of getting it."

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## AFRO-AMERICAN MILL WORK MEN.

Commenting upon the decision of the Carnegie Company to replace their Hungarian workmen with Afro-Americans, the Post of this city has this to say:

In the southern Negroes the Carnegie Company will find a laboring class infinitely more desirable than that of which they are divesting themselves. The Negro is not an agitator and anarchist. Here and there we find one infatuated by a morsel of education—just enough to bewilder him—and is disposed to be both ridiculous and offensive; but as a rule they are industrious, simple in their tastes and wants, instinctively conservative, and profoundly attached to our social and political order. It is no part of their scheme of life to destroy the forms of government under which they live, and to conspire against the rights of property. There are criminals among them, as there are among all other peoples, but crime, violence and lawlessness are not characteristic of them. Taken all in all, they constitute the best laboring class in the world, so far as experience in this country goes.

This is well. We are pleased to observe that the Post takes a position so thoroughly in accord with reason and experience, and so intensely American. The white press is beginning to recognize the unwisdom and folly of importing a heterogeneous mass of foreign anarchists and bomb throwers while there is already within our borders a class of laborers that is at once docile and available.

The hand of the COLORED AMERICAN has never been lifted in violence against the institutions of his country. He has had no Chicago and New Orleans reversal of law and order to dangle in the face of his government. He has had no place in riot and arson. In the confusion of war and quiet of peace, he has been at all times a loyal American, a faithful and constant citizen. He seeks under every circumstance the closest alignment with that economic policy which means progress and power to his country. The doors of his churches and schools are closed against none because of race or condition. The columns of his press are a free forum where all may meet and reason together. His highest passion is patriotism and his deepest hatred that against violence upon the body-politic. He is an American.

Wherever the opportunity has been extended him to demonstrate his capacity for the skilled labor required in manufacture, the results have been of invariable satisfaction. In the steel works at Steelton Pa., it is stated upon authority of Messrs. Washfield & Jefferson of that establishment that in manufacturing steel, from which steel rails are made and the rails themselves, frogs, switches, signal plates and in all that the company makes, the Afro-American is entirely competent. He stands at the side of the white workman and laborer in the frog shop, the rail mill or the inside of the Bessemer. In the mill of Moorehead Bros. & Co. at Sharnsburg Pa., his skill commands the highest prices, although the Amalgamated Society snarled finger in his face with a defiant glare. The Carnegie Company has chosen well and there can be no question but that the Afro-American will vindicate the wisdom of the choice. When he shall have qualified himself for the supreme test of the Keystone State he will not have to climb a Chinese wall to face the lurid forges of Andrew Carnegie and the haunting flat of the Amalgamated Association. The young men of the race should learn how to work steel more and their jaws less. There is a field for the skilled workman rich in profit and honor. Possess it.—Colored American.

## PLAN TO CAPTURE PENNSYLVANIA.

The scheme to capture Pennsylvania, which a few of the inner council of the democratic leaders are said to have in mind, does not seem to the average outsider to be a very promising enterprise. Pennsylvania has been so long in the republican column, and its republicanism has been or such a robust and pronounced brand, that the average man has considered that her partisan status is fixed for a good many years to come. A change of base by Vermont, Maine, Texas or Mississippi comes as near the compass of reasonable expectation as such a revolution on the part of the Keystone State would. Occasionally Pennsylvania goes democratic in state conventions when republicans make poor nominations or when

there is discord and demoralization in the party from any cause. The present Governor of the State is a Democrat. In presidential contests however the state has always remained true to the republican party for many years past.

It is well to bear in mind, however that even in presidential contests Pennsylvania has not always declared for the republican side. In 1866 when New England, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa and Wisconsin gave their electoral votes to Fremont, Pennsylvania supported Buchanan. It was in 1890 that that commonwealth came over to the republican party. Previous to that year their favors had been bestowed on the Democracy. She was, in the ante-war days, accounted about as reliably Democratic as New Jersey is now. Once or twice the Whigs captured her in presidential years by small majorities, but not under conditions which would justify anybody in placing her in the doubtful column for the future. Not even the tariff issue in those old days—and Pennsylvania had a supreme interest in that question then, as she has had since—was sufficient to make her break permanently with the Democratic party.

It is true, of course, that the republicans' lead in Pennsylvania in 1892 was only 64,000, in comparison with one of about 16,000 greater in the two presidential contests immediately preceding. But the margin has often been far lower than this. Garfield carried the state by only 37,000, and Hayes by but 13,000. While the tariff remains a leading issue in politics it seems safe to predict that Pennsylvania will remain in the republican column. The cutting down of the republican margin in Ohio in 1892 to near the vanishing point, though, is cited by the democrats as an illustration of what sharp party management may do in states where the dominant party feels so sure of its power as to neglect all precautions against defeat, and the man who engineered this special assault on the republican line in Ohio is a Pennsylvanian—W. F. Harry, the head of the Democratic National Committee. But when the Keystone state's Democratic Bonapartes and Von Moltkes make their great *coupe main*, in 1896 they may find that the Republican chieftains are not altogether unprepared.

## INTERESTING INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF MISS JULIA W. MASON.

She was born a slave in the "Old Dominion" at the breaking out of the war. When six and a half months old her mother died and her dying request was "that she never be brought up a slave." The father, a half Indian and a free man bought this sickly infant when seven months old, paying one hundred dollars for it. She was brought to Washington in 1852 and entered the public schools, from which she was graduated in June 1880, High School, and June 1891, Miner Normal School. She was appointed in September, 1891, as teacher, and in December, 1892, was made principal of the building from which she was graduated. She remained as such with but one year's exception until Dec. 1891 when she was transferred to the Washington High School as instructor in English and Book-keeping, in which she is now employed.

She was elected President of O. P. Mort'n Corp., No. 1, Dec. 1890, and served one year. The same year she was elected Department Suptor Vice President, the first and only colored woman who has held said position in the Department of Potomac, W. R. C. The following year she was appointed Department Secretary. In December, 1892, O. P. Morton Corps by unanimous vote made her their president again. She was also appointed to succeed herself as Department Secretary. She is now serving her third successive year as a Staff Officer of the Department, which entitles her to a vote in the National Convention for the third time. The Department of Potomac numbering a little over 700 women 500 of whom are white, has some as loyal hearted women of the other race as ever lived.

She was a delegate from the District S. S. International Convention in Pittsburg three years ago. The same season she was delegate-at-large for the Virginia Baptist S. S. convention held in Lexington, Va. She is a member of the Woman's League, the Bethel Historical and Literary Society's Advisory Board and Minor Industrial Association, all of the Negro. She is to prepare a paper for the Educational Association to be held at the World's Fair July 25-28, and is at all times an active force in the literary development of our people.—Ez.