

BOOK CHAT

By Mary White Ovington

Chairman, Board of Directors of the N. A. A. C. P.

"The American Race Problem," by E. B. Reuter. Published by The Thomas W. Crowell Company, 393 Fourth avenue, New York City. Price \$2.75.

An amazing number of books discussing the race problem are being printed from year to year. This volume of Reuter's, professor of sociology at the University of Iowa, impresses me as the best up to date. It has careful statistics concerning the Negro population, health, economic status, education, the church, and crime. There is also a comprehensive bibliography at the end of each chapter. The comment is dispassionate sometimes to the point of dullness, but clear, and on the whole very favorable.

"As a result of intermixture the Negro as such will ultimately disappear from the population and the race problem will be solved. But in the meantime there will be the problem of defining relations in terms tolerable to the members of each racial group."

What those terms should be is shown in another clear cut statement. "It would be to the advantage of the Negroes and to the advantage of the white people, to remove all handicaps imposed by caste and other prejudice. They retard the cultural advance of the Negroes and to that extent the advance of the community. The result is the same whether the Negroes are handicapped in their individual freedom directly by discriminatory acts or by the existence of a sentimental race complex."

Prof. Reuter does not believe in what he calls the nationalistic movement—voluntary segregation. Only in open competition he feels can men do their best work. "Separate institutions are inferior institutions. They are manned by persons incompletely assimilated to modern culture."

Solidarity, he believes, can only bring temporary success. He considers the two races as equal in cultural possibilities, declaring that "for two decades, scholars have accepted as a provisional and fairly well working hypothesis the position that the various races and people of the world are essentially equal in mental ability and capacity for civilization." There are many opponents to the Negro whom we can now gladly declare are not scholars! Reuter shows up Dr. Dean of two decades ago, who found extraordinary differences between Negro and white brains, because he knew which were Negro and which were white. Reuter finds little work of first importance as yet produced by the American Negro, but he accounts for this on cultural, not physiological grounds.

The discussion on lynching and crime is admirable. Among other things, the author says: "There is a deep seated and all prevailing fear of the Negro in the American South. One source of this fear is the treatment the Negro has received at the hands of the whites. The slavery of the Negro, his economic and industrial exploitation, his moral degradation, and other historic facts of the Southern situation are fundamentally repugnant to civilized moral standards." This condition creates crime against the weaker races, since "the presence of a misused person is a perpetual reminder of conduct in violation of the customary standards, and such an irritant becomes an object of aversion and hatred."

The book is a scholar's presentation of an immense mass of material which he has accumulated for years. It lacks the human note. One questions whether Prof. Reuter has any friendly, intimate knowledge of the educated Negroes of today. If he had he could scarcely indulge in his crushing criticism of "classical training," the college education given after the war at such institutions as Atlanta, Fisk, Talladega and Tougaloo. The contact of the newly emancipated black with the consecrated teachers of these schools was the finest one thing the American Negro has ever had. Reuter values also, perhaps too highly, the cultural standards of the white Americans. The Negro musical shows were far more artistic in the past when they catered chiefly to their own race, than today when they are doctored up to suit white Broadway. Roland Hayes sang for years to appreciative colored audiences before England and France had told white America to listen to him. But these are minor criticisms. On the whole, the book is generous in its spirit, and full of important material. It is both a text book and a disquisition.

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AKRON CAUTIONS AGAINST INFLUX OF POPULATION

The National Urban League, by its Department of Industrial Relations, has just released the following statement with reference to what appears to be a sudden, unwarranted migration to Akron:

"Negroes throughout the country from practically all of the Southern and Middle Western states and from as far west as Los Angeles, are coming to Akron looking for work. Some of them are coming upon the invitation of relatives and friends who have lived in Akron; some have heard through various sources that the city is short of workers. Akron's industries are reported on a firm foundation, and are working a full time schedule, but it is feared that if the intake of new workers does not cease Akron will be unable to take care of the numbers who are finding their way to the city.

"George W. Thompson, executive secretary of the Association for Colored Community Work, has conferred with the Better Akron Federation, the Local Community Chest and other public and private agencies and advises that persons planning to come to Akron expecting to find work immediately should delay their coming until those who are already there are properly intergraded within the social and industrial life of the community.

"Akron has been fortunate in not having unwieldy unemployment or business depression periods, because the prosperous automobile industry kept the rubber manufacturing plants busy. This probably accounts for the opinion generally thought to be true, that work is always plentiful there.

"The Urban League is making known the fact that such is not the case, and advises that persons who contemplate going to Akron for work should obtain it before reaching the city or be prepared to maintain themselves for several weeks and perhaps longer, while seeking employment."

LOS ANGELES N. A. A. C. P. FIGHTS SEGREGATION AT THE BATHING BEACH

New York—Dr. H. C. Hudson, the president of the Los Angeles Branch of the N. A. A. C. P., and three companions have undergone arrest and paid a fine as part of a fight the Branch is making against an attempt to exclude colored people from Manhattan Beach and the bathing privileges there.

In order to exclude colored people from the beach and bathing privileges the City of Manhattan Beach leased the beach front and the municipal pier to a private individual for the sum of one dollar, and this individual gave orders that the police were to eject or arrest "undesirable characters" trespassing on the beach frontage for which he held the lease.

Dr. H. C. Hudson and three companions insisted on their right to bathe on the city's property and were arrested, the police testifying that they had been instructed to exclude all colored people as "undesirable." Each of the colored men was fined \$100 and all released in \$500 bail, their attorney giving notice of appeal.

In the absence in Europe of Arthur B. Springarn, chairman of the N. A. A. C. P. national legal committee, Mr. Springarn's associate, Charles H. Studin, is sending legal citations to Los Angeles.

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Cheapside First Home of Great British Bank

How came the bank of England to be built? And why the appellation "The Old Lady of Threadneedle Street?" Mr. H. Rooksby Steele, a well-known London architect, supplies the answers in an article on the architectural history of Britain's bullion house. Many think that Sir John Soane, the wizard of Lincoln's Inn-fields, built the bank. His are the girding walls, but in the raising of the fabric three other names—those of Sampson, Taylor and Cockerell—have to be joined. Mercer's hall, Cheapside, was the bank's first home; but a quick move was made to the Grocer's hall, in Poultry, and it was not until 1752 that the foundation stone of the present bank was laid. George Sampson was the first architect, and it is curious that no building, other than the bank, can be attributed to his hand, a writer in the Cleveland Plain Dealer comments. In the cornice extending the full length of the building, Taylor sculptured an excellent figure of Britannia, some years after the completion of the building. "This carving, the 'trade mark' of the bank," writes Mr. Steele, "was probably the inspiration for that trite appellation, the 'Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.'" Taylor added to Sampson's building, and in 1870 the Gordon riots led the directors to fear that the adjoining church of St. Christopher-le-Stocks might lend itself as a dangerous vantage point for a mob, so powers were obtained, the fabric was pulled down, and more extensions were made.

First Rude Telescope Evolved by Accident

When the son of a Sixteenth century spectacle maker in Holland picked up some spectacle lenses in his father's shop one day and happened to hold up two of them, one in each hand, he was surprised on looking through both lenses to see the weathercock on a neighboring church steeple greatly enlarged. Excited by this discovery, he ran to his father and told him what he had seen. The father immediately took the two lenses and repeated the experiment. The result confirmed his boy's report and the father set to work at once, fixing two movable lenses on a board—an idea suggested to him by the varying view he had obtained by moving the lenses in his hands—and thus the first rude telescope came into being. Shortly after the news of this discovery had leaked out, a friend wrote to Galileo in Italy describing the contrivance of the Dutch optician and it was from this description that the Italian inventor built the telescope that made him famous—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle.

Cape Horn

Gen. William T. Sherman wrote in his Memoirs that Cape Horn was an island rounded like an oven, "after which it takes its name (Ornos) oven." However, he was in error, for the Spanish word for oven is "hornos," though it is pronounced without the "h" sound. The island to which Sherman referred is known as Horn Island and the actual cape is only a portion of the island, says the Pathfinder Magazine. But the cape did not get its name because of its resemblance to an oven. It was named for the Dutch navigator William Schouten van Hoorn who, with Lemaire, doubled the cape in 1616. Horn is an anglicized form of Hoorn. In Spanish it is called Cabo de Hornos. No wonder Sherman was misled, for literally Cabo de Hornos would mean cape of ovens, that is, it would according to the form, did it not have a different origin.

Next Best Thing

It was a country town, and at a meeting of the leading merchants it was decided that the fire company and appliances available were not sufficient for a place of such importance. They therefore decided to form a supplementary company and, having enlisted several members, consulted the chief of the fire department as to what was to be done.

"Well," said the chief, "let us suppose there were two fires in the neighborhood and all our available men were called to one, do you think you could manage to put out the other?"

"Well, we couldn't do that, but we could keep our fire going till you came back from the other."—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

Skill That Becomes Art

The attainment of proficiency, the pushing of your skill with attention to the most delicate shades of excellence, is a matter of vital concern. Efficiency of a practically flawless kind may be reached naturally in the struggle for bread. But there is something beyond—a higher point, a subtle and unmistakable touch of love and pride beyond mere skill; almost an inspiration which gives to all work that finish which is almost art—which is art.—Conrad.

Poland's Capital

Warsaw was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Poland, and later the chief city of the Russian province of that name. The peace settlement of 1919 re-established Poland as a sovereign state with the republican form of government, and Warsaw is the capital. It has a population of 700,000, one-third of whom are Jews. It is an important railway center and is the first place in what used to be southwestern Russia.

Nature Has Equipped Sea Bird for Piracy

The man-o'-war is a sea bird with a body about the size of that of an ordinary barnyard hen, monstrous long wings, spreading as much as ten feet, a long bill with hooked tip that makes a dangerous weapon, and tiny feet so weak that the bird can scarcely waddle.

With such equipment, the bird is an accomplished aeronaut, circling and diving in midair with lightning speed, or hanging on motionless wings in the teeth of a gale without losing ground. It gets its name from its habit of dashing forth, after the manner of the old-fashioned frigate ship, or fullalied man-o'-war in pursuit of a merchantman, and playing the villain's part with the peaceful booby returning home from the sea with a maw full of fish for the powder-puff youngster on the islet's battlements.

The frightened booby squawks and dodges, but it cannot escape the threatening pirate bird; so in despair it disgorges in midair and makes its escape, while the man-o'-war dives like a plummet, recaptures the morsel before it drops into the sea, and makes for its own youngster atop the islet or lies in wait for another encounter.—National Geographic Magazine.

Desert Animals That Scorpions Can't Harm

One of the most fascinating chapters in animal poisons is the subject of natural immunity, the fact that some animals are immune to the poisons of others and remain unharmed if stung or bitten by the poisonous animal, whereas all other sorts of beasts succumb.

A case in point is that of desert animals which are unharmed by a scorpion's sting. The desert fox, the kangaroo rat and other inhabitants of deserts where scorpions abound are in this happy position. Their cousins, living far away from the desert, would at once be seriously injured by a scorpion's sting, whereas the desert breeds remain unharmed. It is to be supposed that in the far distant past, before the desert animals had this complete immunity to scorpion venom, those which were stung and could not resist died, leaving no offspring. Their luckier brothers, who happened to have a harder constitution, survived and left behind them a resistant race of descendants.—Prof. H. Munro Fox in the Forum.

"Twas a hard and bloody battle at the pistol range. At just the instructor called: "Fire at Random!" After the carnage had ceased one freshman still stood with his pistol at "ready," a full clip in it. "Hey, you!" yelled the instructor "Why didn't you shoot?" "I'm waiting for 'Random to stick a head around the parapet."

Getting and Spending

A familiar adage is, "Easy come, easy go." This is peculiarly applicable to money. The easier money comes the easier it goes, and conversely the harder money comes the more carefully it is expended. Only the man who knows the cost of a dollar, knows its value.—Gett.

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