



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis Soldier's issue

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NEGRO ART

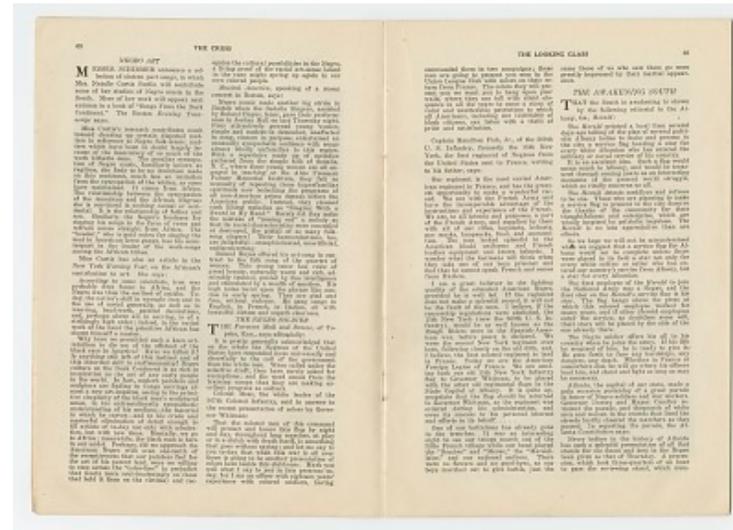
MESSRS. SCHIRMER announce a collection of sixteen part songs, in which Mrs. Natalie Curtis Burlin will contribute some of her studies of Negro music in the South. More of her work will appear next autumn in a book of "Songs From the Dark Continent." The Boston Evening Transcript says:

Miss Curtis's research contributes much toward clearing up certain disputed matters in reference to Negro folk-music, matters which have been in doubt largely because of the inaccuracy of so much of the work hitherto done. The peculiar syncopation of Negro music, familiarly known as ragtime, she finds to be no invention made on this continent, much less an imitation from the syncopation of the whites, as some have maintained. It comes from Africa. The relationship between the syncopation of the American and the African Negroes she is convinced is nothing casual or accidental. It is the relationship of father and son. Similarly, the Negro's fondness for singing his songs in the form of verse and refrain comes straight from Africa. The "header," who is paid extra for singing the lead in American levee gangs, has his counterpart in the leader of the work-songs among the African tribes.

Miss Curtis has also an article in the New York Evening Post, on the African's contribution to art. She says: According to some scientists, iron was probably first found in Africa, and the Negro was thus the earliest of smiths. Today, the native's skill in wrought iron and in the use of metal generally, as well as in weaving, bead-work, painted decorations, and, perhaps above all, in carving, is of a strikingly high order; indeed, in the varied work of the hand the primitive African has shown himself a master.

Why have we permitted such a keen art-intuition to die out of the offshoot of the black race in America? Have we killed it? Is anything still left of this instinct and of this inherited skill in craftsmanship? Negro culture on the Dark Continent is as rich in inspiration as the art of any early people in the world. In fact, modern painters and sculptors are finding in Congo carvings almost a new art-impetus, seeking in the primitive simplicity of the black man's sculptural sense, in his extraordinarily sympathetic understanding of his medium—the material in which he carves—and in his crude and masterful elimination of detail enough to fill artists of to-day not only with admiration, but with new ideas. Mentally, we go to Africa; meanwhile, the black man is here in our midst. Perhaps, did we approach the American Negro with even one-tenth of the receptiveness that our painters feel for the art of his parent land, were we willing to step across the "color line" (a prejudice that reacts more soul-deadeningly on those that hold it than on the victims) and recognize the cultural possibilities in the Negro, a living proof of the racial art-sense latent in the race might spring up again in our own colored people.

Musical America, speaking of a recent concert in Boston, says: Negro music made another big stride in Boston when the Sedalia Singers, assisted by Roland Hayes, tenor, gave their performance in Jordan Hall on last Thursday night. Four attractively gowned young women, simple and modest in demeanor, unaffected in song, sincere in purpose, entertained an unusually sympathetic audience with songs almost wholly unfamiliar to this region. With a repertoire made up of melodies gathered from the simple folk of Sedalia, N.C., where these young women are all engaged in teaching at the Alice Freeman Palmer Memorial Institute, they felt no necessity of repeating those hyperfamiliar spirituals now bedecking the programs of all non-American prima donnas before the American public. Instead, they crooned such lilting melodies as "Singing With a Sword in My Hand." Rarely did they make the mistake of "ironing out" a melody so that its racial characteristics were concealed or destroyed, the pitfall of so many folk-song singers!



Their harmonizations, too, are delightful—unsophisticated, unartificial, undisconcerting. . . .

Roland Hayes offered his art-song in contrast to the folk song of the quartet of women. This young tenor has voice of great beauty, naturally warm and rich, admirably trained, guided by fine intelligence and stimulated by a wealth of emotion. His high notes burst upon the phrase like sunrise in early spring. They are glad and free, without violence. He sang songs in English, in French, in Italian, all with beautiful diction and superb clearness.

THE NEGRO SOLDIER

THE Farmers Mail and Breeze, of Topeka, Kan., says editorially:

It is pretty generally acknowledged that on the whole the Negroes of the United States have responded more universally and cheerfully to the call of the government than the white men. When called under the selective draft, they have rarely asked for exemptions; and the word comes from training camps that they are making excellent progress as soldiers.

Colonel Moss, the white leader of the 367th Colored Infantry, said in answer to the recent presentation of colors by Governor Whitman:

That the colored men of this command will protect and honor this flag by night and day, throughout long marches, at play or in a clutch with death itself, is something that goes without saying; and let me say to you today that when this war is all over there is going to be another presentation of colors here beside this clubhouse. Mark you well what I say to you in this presence today, for I am an officer with eighteen years' experience with colored soldiers, having

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commanded them in two campaigns; these men are going to present you men in the Union League Club with colors on their return from France. The colors they will present you we want you to hang upon your walls, where they can tell with silent eloquence in all the years to come a story of valor and unutterable patriotism to which all Americans, including our 12,000,000 of black citizens, can listen with a thrill of pride and satisfaction.

Captain Hamilton Fish, Jr., of the 369th U. S. Infantry, formerly the 15th New York, the first regiment of Negroes from the United States sent to France, writing to his father, says:

Our regiment is the most envied American regiment in France, and has the greatest opportunity to make a wonderful record. We are with the French Army and have the incomparable advantage of the instructions and experience of the French. We are, to all intents and purposes, a part of the French Army, and supplied by them with all of our rifles, bayonets, helmets, gas masks, knapsacks, food, and ammunition. The men looked splendid in the American khaki uniforms and French leather equipment and brown helmets. I wonder what the Germans will think when they take one of our boys prisoner and find that he cannot speak French and comes from Harlem.

I am a great believer in the fighting quality of the educated American Negro, provided he is well led. If the regiment does not make a splendid record, it will not be the fault of the men. I believe, if the censorship regulations were abolished, the 15th New York (now the 369th U. S. Infantry), would be as well known as the Rough Riders were in the Spanish-American war, before peace is declared. We were the second New York regiment over here, following closely on the old 69th, and, I believe, the first colored regiment to land in France. Today we are the American Foreign Legion of France. We are sending back our old 15th New York Infantry flag to Governor Whitman, to be placed with the other old regimental flags in the State Capitol at Albany. It is quite appropriate that the flag should be returned to Governor Whitman, as the regiment was ordered during his administration, and owes its success to his personal interest and efforts on its behalf. . . .

One of our battalions has already gone to the trenches. It was an

interesting sight to see our troops march out of the little French village while our band played the "Sombre" and "Meuse," the "Marseillaise," and our national anthem. There were no flowers and no good-byes, as our boys marched out to give battle, just the same those of us who say them go were greatly impressed by their martial appearance.

THE AWAKENING SOUTH

THAT the South is awakening is shown by the following editorial in the Albany, Ga., Herald:

The Herald printed a local item several days ago telling of the plan of several patriotic Albany ladies to make and present the city a service flag bearing a star for every white Albanian who has entered the military or naval service of his country.

It is an excellent idea. Such a flag would mean much to Albany, and would be treasured through coming years as an interesting memento of the present world struggle, which so vitally concerns us all.

The Herald detests meddlers and refuses to be one. Those who are planning to make a service flag to present to the city deserve the thanks of the community for their thoughtfulness and enterprise, which are wholly inspired by patriotic impulses. The Herald is no less appreciative than are others.

So we hope we will not be misunderstood when we suggest that a service flag for Albany would not be complete unless there were placed in its field a star not only for every white soldier or sailor who has entered our country's service from Albany, but a star for every Albanian. The first employee of the Herald to join the National Army was a Negro, and the first star on the Herald's service flag is his star. The flag hangs above the press at which this colored employee worked for many years, and if other Herald employees enter the service, as doubtless some will, their stars will be placed by the side of the one already there.

The Negro soldier offers his all to his country when he joins the army. If his life be required of him, he is ready to give it. He goes forth to face any hardships, any dangers, any death. Whether in France or somewhere else, he will go where his officers lead him, and stand and fight as long as may be necessary.

Atlanta, the capital of our state, made a gala occasion yesterday of a great parade in honor of Negro soldiers and war workers. Governor Dorsey and Mayor Candler reviewed the parade, and thousands of white men and women in the crowds that lined the streets lustily cheered the marchers as they passed. In reporting the parade, the Atlanta Constitution says:

Never before in the history of Atlanta has such a splendid presentation of all that stands for the finest and best in the Negro been given as that of Thursday. A procession, which took three-quarters of an hour to pass the reviewing stand, which num-

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