

The Mulatto in the United States



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The mulatto in the United States. Including a study of the rôle of mixed-blood races throughout the world. By Edward Byron Reuter. (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1918. 417 p. \$2.50)

This is styled a study in the field of ethnology but it betrays its lack of the scientific point of view in the very questions raised in the preface of the work. Believing that the future of this nation is conditioned by the treatment which the race problem receives, the author is concerned with the advisability of the amalgamation of the races as an ideal, wondering whether the infusion of ten per cent of negro blood would so materially lower the ideals of the intellectual and cultural capacity of the population of the country as to cause its comparative decline among the nations. Thinking that such might be the case, he discusses the problem of checking the fusion already in progress and establishing some sort of harmonious working relations between the races while they separately work out their racial destiny. Conceding that in regard to the fundamental question there is no consensus of scholarly opinion, in as much as the problem has not been attacked in a scholarly way, one would expect to find in this work a scientific treatise giving stimulus to that desirable end. On the contrary, however, the author's preoccupied mind and apparent prejudice render him inadequate to the task of treating the question scientifically.

In the very beginning of the work the author handicaps himself by the misuse of the word "mulatto." He has used it to include all negroes of mixed ancestry regardless of the degree of intermixture, whereas the proper use of the word in the United States, the language of which should determine the use of the terms of this work, is to designate persons who are known in the communities in which they live as products of a mixture of Caucasian and African blood. When even a casual reader finds in this book that Nat Turner, Samuel Ringold Ward, Martin R. Delaney, George W. Murray, T. McCants Stewart, Charles Young, and Nannie H. Burroughs are placed in the column of mulattoes, merely for the purpose of supporting the long-since uprooted theory of racial superiority by showing that the mulattoes are superior to the blacks, he must doubt the scientific value of a dissertation fraught with such errors. The author then goes astray very much as the ante-bellum writers did, as well as writers of to-day of the type of W. H. Thomas and H. W. Odum, in trying to prove the inferiority of the negroes.

His tendency toward misstatement is evident, moreover, in the fact that even white persons have been listed here as mulattoes, as in the case of Benjamin Lundy. Teeming with such errors, then, the work on the whole is decidedly dangerous but may be of some service to investigators

who, being already generally informed in the field of negro history, can make use of the actual facts which the author has collected.

Eliminating the unscientific comments from page to page, one would consider as chapters of value those entitled, "Mixed blood races," "The mulatto as the key to the race problem," "The amount and the nature of race intermixture in the United States," and "The growth of the mulatto class." Here we find some interesting facts about the races in primitive times and about the race admixture in the West Indies, South Africa, and America. There is also some information on the concubinage of negro women with white men, unlawful polygamy, and intermarriage with Indians. Mr. Reuter carefully neglects to say anything about the concubinage of white women with negro men, a condition which prevailed in many parts of the country prior to the reaction when slavery, becoming an economic institution, reduced the negroes to the plane of tools for exploitation. Chapters eight to fourteen are practically worthless and the author would have a better title to scholarship if they had not been written.

C. G. WOODSON

A woman's story of pioneer Illinois. By Christiana Holmes Tillson.

Edited by M. M. Quaife in the Lakeside classics. (Chicago: R. R. Donnelley and sons, 1919. 169 p.)

Perhaps the housekeepers of Montgomery county, Illinois, imagine their "servant problem" is an affliction of modern days; if so, a perusal of Mrs. Tillson's description of the domestic economy of that region in the eighteen-twenties ought to lessen perceptibly the burden of their wail. For when keeping house involved not only three meals a day — for a varying and large company — but meat-dressing, candle-making, and various manufacturing processes as well, the need of help was surely more acute; and yet that need was fully as hard, if not harder, to fill than even in these degenerate days. Mrs. Tillson considered herself lucky when she had a young girl capable of giving her any assistance at all; and eventually even her New England conscience could *almost* persuade itself that providence had taken a hand in guiding affairs when, just at a time of special distress, two runaway household "slaves" (indentured negroes) sought refuge under her roof and she was able to buy out their owner's rights to their services.

At that, Mrs. Tillson's menage was considered an especially luxurious one by the neighbors, most of whom were westerners of southern extraction. They "were much perplexed to know what Tillson's wife found to do. She didn't spin nor weave, and had that little Dutch girl, and the men helped her to milk . . . never seed her in the 'truck patch'; didn't believe she knew how to hoe"!

This contrast between yankee and southern ways features all through