

desires would have had to go by the board. There is then a more permanent or broader good which I am able to conceive, a good which is nothing more nor less than the widest possible harmony of feelings and efforts. In order to attain this, I may have to forego some more specific harmony. And indeed I may not be able to attain it perfectly. Nevertheless the whole drive of my personality is toward such a consistent scheme of satisfactions.

Now, this scheme of possible satisfactions is not subject wholly or even largely to my individual whim or desire. It is rooted deeply in my nature and in the nature of the environment. The difference between being rational and irrational is just the difference between being aware of the conditions of this wider satisfaction and not being aware of them. Reason, in short, is the consciousness of what makes for the completest harmonization of feelings and efforts.

Thus the author sees the reasonable life to be that life which can organize its impulses as widely as possible into a consistent system. In every such life there will be conflicts. These are to be resolved, however, not by the "might-makes-right" principle of one impulse overmastering another, but by the "consistency" principle of fitting the specific impulses into a self-sustaining and harmonious scheme.

Coming from the pen of one who has done perhaps as penetrating work as anyone in the analysis of life processes, this defense of reason as the fundamentally harmonizing factor is impressive. The book suffers, no doubt, for the general reader, from a too great particularity. It seems to have served the author as a kind of exercise in writing out his own mind upon certain mooted points. But this greater particularity will make the book all the more valuable to the philosophical reader. Particularly valuable is the critical appraisal both of Utilitarianism and of Ethical Idealism of the Thomas Hill Green type and the setting over against them, as a corrective, of the author's own view (so ably presented in his earlier volume, "Development and Purpose") of a developing harmony. In days when the instinct enters so uncritically and mischievously into psychological and popular writings, a calm, acute analysis of this kind is exceedingly valuable.

H. A. OVERSTREET

## Negro Poets

*The Book of American Negro Poetry.* Edited by James Weldon Johnson. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$1.75.

*Negro Folk Rhymes.* Compiled by Thomas W. Talley. The Macmillan Company. \$2.25.

*Harlem Shadows.* By Claude McKay. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$1.75.

IT is but natural that in the revival of poetry during the past decade in the United States the Negro, with his wealth of emotionalism, his imaginative and creative gifts, his abundance of experience, and his vividness of expression, should play his part. There is no racial group in America which has a larger share of that sense of rhythmic values from which poetry is formed; nor of that gift of imaginative creativeness, of being able to shake off mere mortal inhibitions and prohibitions and to soar into regions of pure fancy. It is of this gift that the "spirituals" or jubilee songs were born. When the oppression of slavery became too great for the slaves to bear, their only refuge was in flights of song addressed to that vividly tangible divine being who promised them rest in Heaven from earthly cares and sorrows. A second step in this development was the Negro dialect verse and story of which Paul Laurence Dunbar was the great master. These expressions of homely philosophy and of the trials and triumphs of the illiterate Negro go to make up a folk-lore that can be called distinctively American. We have now come to a third phase of development in which the Negro poet has almost entirely shaken off the limitations which dialect imposes. He is yet largely propagandist and

he voices more frequently than is consistent with accepted literary standards his bitter and vehement denunciation of lynching, of the denial of opportunity, of the proscriptions of race prejudice. This is unfortunate, in a sense, yet it is a natural reaction. When Carl Sandburg or Amy Lowell or Edgar Lee Masters begin to write they have only the problems of ordinary mortals to contend with. But when an American Negro undertakes to express his emotions in verse or prose or music or sculpture or painting he has the additional burden of a prejudice which baffles and confronts him every minute of his waking hours.

This condition makes the three books I am reviewing all the more remarkable. If one looks at them as the work of writers, they are examples of talent of which Americans may well be proud; if looked at as the creations of Negro writers, they are amazingly fine. In Mr. Johnson's book we have a valuable anthology of the work of thirty-one Negro poets, several of them very able ones, prefaced by an essay by Mr. Johnson, who is himself a well-known poet; Mr. Talley's volume is a compilation of often crude but delightfully naive folk-rhymes; Mr. McKay's book of verse is a careful selection of the best that has been done by this young colored man who is destined to be recognized as one of the outstanding and memorable poets of America.

Mr. Johnson's book has its chief value—and this is said in no disparagement of the work of the poets he quotes—in an admirable and well-written preface of some forty pages on *The Creative Genius of the American Negro*. In this he establishes in a manner that has not been done before the rightful place which the Negro occupies in American literature, and his contributions in folk-songs, ragtime, and folk-dances. It will be surprising to many persons to know that the first woman poet in America to publish a volume of her works, except one, was a colored woman, Phillis Wheatley, born in Africa and brought to America as a slave. It will be interesting to know that more than one hundred Negro poets of more or less merit have published volumes of their verse ranging from pamphlets to substantial volumes. Equally surprising and interesting to the uninformed will seem the merit and value of much of the poetry that these colored writers have produced. Mr. Johnson has rendered a genuinely valuable service in thus presenting for the first time the work of these little known writers. Had Mr. Johnson done nothing else than introduce us to the work of Anne Spencer in her charming *Before the Feast of Shushan* and her beautiful *The Wife-Woman*, or to the vigor and genuine merit of Claude McKay, he would have done well. Those who know Mr. Johnson's own verse need not be told of the high place that his work holds in this collection.

It is fortunate that a publisher should at about the same time have brought out Mr. Talley's "Negro Folk Rhymes," a compilation of verse some of it lacking in polish but none of it in interest. Some of it is gay, some sad, all teeming with hard common sense grown out of the conflicts of lowly people with the perplexities of life. Mr. Talley has carefully gathered the best of these rhymes and has edited them with care in a delightful book. An interesting part of the book is the author's lengthy treatise on the origin and development of these rhymes, and the study of the musical scores to which these verses are sung. Walter Clyde Curry, a white professor of Vanderbilt University at Nashville, has written an introduction which is a bit patronizing in its tone.

With the publication of "Harlem Shadows" by Claude McKay we are introduced to the work of a man who shows very genuine poetical promise. His work proves him to be a craftsman with keen perception of emotions, a lover of the colorful and dramatic, strongly sensuous yet never sensual, and an adept in the handling of his phrases to give the subtle variations of thought he seeks. He has mastered the forms of the lyric and the sonnet—in fact, there is in this volume perhaps too much sameness of form. Yet one can have no quarrel with a man who works in that medium in which he is most at home, and I do

not quarrel with Mr. McKay for sticking to these modes of expression.

I wish that I had the ability to convey the sheer delight which this book of verse gives me. Keenly sensitive to color and beauty and tragedy and mirth, he does, as Max Eastman says in his introduction, cause us to "find our literature vividly enriched by a voice from this most alien race among us." Mr. McKay is most compelling when he voices his protest against the wrongs inflicted on his people, yet in his love lyrics there is a beauty and a charm that reveal the true poetic gift. Here is the title-poem with its feeling of tender pathos:

"I hear the halting footsteps of a lass  
In Negro Harlem when the night lets fall  
Its veil. I see the shapes of girls who pass  
To bend and barter at desire's call.  
Ah, little dark girls who in slippered feet  
Go prowling through the night from street to street!

Through the long night until the silver break  
Of day the little gray feet know no rest;  
Through the lone night until the last snow-flake  
Has dropped from heaven upon the earth's white breast,  
The dusky, half-clad girls of tired feet  
Are trudging, thinly shod, from street to street.

Ah, stern harsh world, that in the wretched way  
Of poverty, dishonor, and disgrace,  
Has pushed the timid little feet of clay,  
The sacred brown feet of my fallen race!  
Ah, heart of me, the weary, weary feet  
In Harlem wandering from street to street."

WALTER F. WHITE

## A Lexicon of Labor

*What's What in the Labor Movement.* Compiled by Waldo R. Browne. B. W. Huebsch. \$4.

MR. BROWNE has done a painstaking and scholarly piece of work. He has thought of every word or phrase of common use in the labor movement both at home and abroad and a great many more of which even the labor expert has not heard. He has arranged all these words and phrases in alphabetical order with complete cross-indexing and has written from a paragraph to a page or two explaining each one of them. I open to page 132, for instance, and find a paragraph on Discharge of Wage Earners in Russia and the beginning of a page and a half description of Discipline. On the preceding page are Direct Action, Disability Benefits, and Discharge Book System. This is a typical cross-section of the book.

The test of an encyclopedist like Mr. Browne—at least the test of his value as a scholar—lies in the quality and temper of his definition of such phrases as Direct Action, Bolshevism, and Open Shop rather than of Disability Benefits or the Discharge Book System. I have thought of all the hotly controversial words and phrases I could and have looked them up in Mr. Browne's book. He seems to me to meet the test, with a few minor reservations, most admirably.

Take the phrase One Big Union as an example. It is a phrase that will start a fight in any union meeting. Mr. Browne says, with the cool balance of the scholar: "This term like many others in the labor movement is so loosely and variously used that any exact definition is difficult. To certain timid souls, any departure from strict craft unionism, any labor organization that follows the general structure and lines of an entire industry is One Big Union. . . . But, in the broadest sense, the term denotes an ideal or a purpose, rather than any present activity—an ideal and purpose that have long exerted a powerful influence on the working-classes of every country."

Of Bolshevism Mr. Browne says, with admirable irony: "In

the realm of propaganda rather than of fact Bolshevism is a common epithet applied to any unorthodox social or economic views, the purpose being to discredit such views without going to the trouble of refuting them." Mr. Browne does not use this well-turned criticism as a substitute for a definition. This remark merely tops off an accurate and brief description of recent Russian history savoring neither of the diatribes of Mr. Gompers nor the eulogies of Albert Rhys Williams.

The only fault one can find with Mr. Browne and his dictionary is a lack of detail here and there where detail is much needed. Anarchism, for instance, is given a page and quarter and the American Federation of Labor only a page and three-quarters. Judged by their relative importance in the American labor movement either Anarchism should get a quarter of a page or the A. F. of L. four pages. Nor is it merely a matter of measurement. Many interesting and important items about the A. F. of L. have been entirely omitted. On the positive side the growth in its membership is perhaps the most vital fact about the Federation, yet only its present size is mentioned and then incidentally. On the negative side the power of the Federation to call strikes is an instance. That it has this power is one of the most prevalent misconceptions among the uninformed.

These faults are probably due to Mr. Browne's purpose rather than his method. He has obviously set out not so much to write a reference book on the American labor movement as to write a dictionary of labor definitions. At the most his shortcomings merely point to the need for another book: a survey or directory of American labor which will list and describe in detail all the labor organizations in the country with all the information about them which people want in a hurry when they sit down to read the paper—or to write an article. If Mr. Browne does not write it, some one else certainly should.

EVANS CLARK

## Hugo Wast

*La Corbata Celeste.* By Hugo Wast. Buenos Aires: Agencia General de Libreria.

PIZARRO began to nibble at Peru in the early twenties, and Spain abandoned the Southern Continent a hundred years ago; yet our Latin neighbors count for less in the literary sisterhood today than their decrepit and decried old mother nation. No one knows exactly why. Good Protestants remind us that Catholicism has proved a blight on all forms of intellectual activity; but Italy, Belgium, and some of the best of France are Catholic, with an excellent array of writers. Argentina, Brazil, and Chile will no doubt give the world great books in time. They spent the larger part of the nineteenth century in civil strife, it must be remembered, and have only recently settled down to peaceable growing.

No one has explained, either, why their best writers have come from their weaker nations. Blanco Fombona is a Venezuelan and Ricardo Palma a Peruvian. Argentina, the rich and enterprising, with her brilliant, cosmopolitan capital rapidly approaching Paris and Chicago in size, has produced no great poet, no great novelist. Yet Argentinian history is at least as rich in romance as that of any other section of the New World. It offers the story writer a virgin field, and the conscientious Argentinian novelist Hugo Wast has begun to turn it.

Wast has the ear of his countrymen. Two or three of his novels are approaching the hundred thousand mark in sales, which is a large figure for a country with so few readers as Argentina can offer. Two of them, the stirring arraignment of his profligate capital which bears the title "Ciudad Turbulenta, Ciudad Alegre," and the earlier study of the revolutionary period, "La Casa de los Cuervos," have been translated into English, and the last-mentioned has appeared on the stage