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## BOOKS

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### THE RISING SOUTH.

**The Southerner.** A Novel. Being the autobiography of Nicholas Worth. Published by Doubleday, Page & Co., New York.

This is not a new novel, but there is no staleness about it; and while it has the artful touch of fictional autobiography, it is not improbably a veritable life story in its principal outlines.

The scenes are laid in a Southern State, neither named nor definitely indicated, but very like North Carolina if one may draw an inference from the atmosphere of the story. It begins with the Civil War, when "Nicholas Worth" was a boy old enough to know the truth about Santa Claus, yet young enough to suspect the war of being another such entertaining invention until the dead bodies of Confederate soldiers began to come home for burial.

To all the boys of that time, North as well as South, the homely touches of these opening chapters must set the doors of their old-time memories ajar. Here, at any rate, this is a very true story. The war was so far away from most of us that it long seemed unreal in many a commonplace back country community of both sections. Neighbors had gone a-soldiering, to be sure; but that seemed like a picnic, and you wished you could have gone with them—only your folks wouldn't let you. But the war had no reality to you until some of those neighbors came back in boxes, and you went awe-struck and curious to the little churchyard to see them buried.

The war plays its part, though not obtrusively, in making the interest of this Southerner's story. Incidentally there are pictures of the old South as it really was. Its overwrought provincialism is brought out boldly, yet in a spirit of well-tempered sympathy as well as judicious candor. This candor and sympathy continue hand in hand in the after years, down through the last page and into the present period. They are especially admirable and all the more so for being plainly human wherever the Negro question enters in, whether as a Southern problem or a Northern diversion.

It is in the solution of that problem on high grounds, neither sectional nor national, that the fictitious autobiographer has made his career. He has done this in the spirit, even if not at all angles according to the academic doctrines, of essential democracy. His fine epigram that "there can be no such thing as a democracy with any zone of silence about it," will be recognized as giving the keynote to his character. He is a Southern democrat with a little "d." For the Negro, for example, he cares nothing "merely because he is a Negro," but "because he is a man—or a child";

and he prefers "to think of the people in the Southern States as a people—white and black alike—living under certain conditions, which can be made very fortunate and prosperous conditions, rather than about any particular class or race of them." Applying this principle to educational questions, to the tendency to distinguish either in favor of Negroes or against them in educational effort, he declares his conviction that "into any proper scheme of education, there are no white men, no black men—only men."

One observation will especially interest many of our readers. It is not the autobiographer's, but he puts it approvingly into the mouth of his brother. Referring to a co-operative farming plan, this far-seeing brother says: "This is the first step; the men who use the land best must at last get its fruits, and our system of ownership and control must ultimately shape itself to this primary principle of justice."

The whole spirit of this novel finds compact utterance in its last paragraph: "Therefore to you who read this, if you believe (as I do) that our American ideal is invincible and immortal, and that men may in truth govern themselves and give fair play and abolish privilege and keep the doors of opportunity open—even here where fell the Shadow of the one Great Error of the Fathers—we who have toiled where doubt was heaviest now send good cheer."

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### THE SOUTH AND THE NEGRO.

**The Basis of Ascendancy: A Discussion of Certain Principles of Public Policy Involved in the Development of the Southern States.** By Edgar Gardner Murphy, author of "The Present South." Published by Longmans, Green & Co., New York, London, Bombay and Calcutta. Price, \$1.50 net, \$1.60 postpaid.

This book, by a Southern man of Montgomery, Ala., is another of those expressions from the South which indicate that the day of the Bourbon is passing.

Perhaps one might better explain the antipathy of white men toward Negroes in harmony with Professor Royce's idea than with the author's—as among childish phenomena due to the traditional relations of master and slave, rather than fundamental. But the substance of the book rests upon conditions as they are, and tries to make the best of them regardless of philosophical abstractions. Its spirit is democratic, with an aristocratic tinge we should say, but at any rate genuinely even if not completely democratic.

Assuming that the Negro is not a white man in a black skin, but that there are fundamental differences which government cannot alter, the author lays down the premise that the Negro "has not been adequately accorded the economic sup-

port of the profounder social forces of security, opportunity and hope," and that this fact the government may "largely alter if it will." The question is, will it do so? And the purpose of the book is to present a basis for "an affirmative answer to that question." Not to answer it in the affirmative is regarded by the author as a suicidal policy for the white race.

"The law which does not protect the weak, will not—and in the end cannot—protect the strong. That which our oblique processes and our temperamental discriminations—whether in the letter of our statutes, the administration of the police, the opinions of the bench, or the verdicts of the jury—must destroy (if the zealots of race antipathy shall have their way), is not the Negro, nor the white man only, but society itself—society as a sufficient instrument of equitable and profitable relations between man and man. When, accordingly, we cheat the weak out of his legitimate protections, we not only despoil ourselves of our consciences and our peace, but we cheat our generation and its children out of the heritage of our institutions."

Solid ground to stand upon, that; and the author is right in intimating that the admonition is needed by the North as well as the South.

Race mixture of blood the author does not fear from inter-racial justice and equality of opportunity. He fears it from repression. "A race's life," he truly says, "is an organic growth; it is not like a dead platform that we can safely build our houses over or our walls about; it is a living thing. You can force it back and can lay it prostrate, but when you have driven it even underground it will reappear. Its living roots, its secret and extending tentacles of growth, will search beneath the familiar soil, will find their way below the foundations of your wall, will come up upon the outer side—intertwined with your own growth, blended with your stock, and terrible in their confusions and their fruitage." It

is not upon repression, therefore, that this author would preserve the racial peculiarities and maintain the integrity of both races. "Build your walls, if you will," he exclaims, "but give to this race also a garden of noble spaces. Build your walls high in self-protection, but rear them as no dungeon above another life. Let its growth have its own sunshine, light from the same sun, nurture from the same air and the same rains; let all wise and pure conspiracies advance it. Its liberation will mean not its encroachment, but its self-fulfillment. Force it downward into degeneracy and abasement, and, having no garden and no sunshine of its own, its pervasive and intruding death will seek you out. Your sounder health depends less upon its repression than upon its freedom."

With an unanswerable challenge to those who fear amalgamation, the author asks: "How can the Negro be expected to cling to his race world with simplicity of feeling or tenacity of purpose if that world be chiefly synonymous with humiliation, and if the only creditable or honorable world of which he knows is the world of another people?"

As to the white South with her Negro problem, the essential issue as the author sees it is not the Negro at all. "He is comparatively of little significance except as the humble occasion and instrument of the processes through which the South is refining and establishing her conceptions of society and is determining her relations to the country at large, to the world, and to democracy. The fundamental issue is not what we will do with the Negro, but what we—with the Negro as the incident or provocation of our adjustments—will do with our institutions." The question of the Negro's incapacity, the author scouts as irrelevant, the real question being "whether the attitude of the state toward such capacity as he has, is to be that of development or repression."

The problem for the South, as definitely put, is this one of "practical and fundamental policy":

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Daniel Kiefer

"Is the Negro race at the South a large and persistent factor in our economic and political organization, to be, in every fundamental sense, a retrogressive or a co-operative population?" The author's choice may be anticipated, but his hopes as a Southerner can best be expressed in his own words: "It was through the Negro in our experience that the South once lost her mastery, her mastery not over him alone, but over those oppor-

tunities for a national leadership and for an uninterrupted eminence of service to which her capacities entitled her. It may be that through this same strange waiting, baffling factor in her life, her ascendancy, in higher forms, may again return—in forms not threatening the estate and dignity of labor, the sway of freedom, the instinct and custom of our age, but bestowed by a labor which she has freed, and by an age and a democ-

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Elrick bit off the end of a cigar morosely before he continued. "You see," he went on, "my wife's

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\* \* \*

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