



"THE BUFFALOES"

Underwood & Underwood.

THE 367th (Colored) INFANTRY OF THE NATIONAL ARMY WITH COLORED LINE OFFICERS MARCHING UP FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

A writer in the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, *Republican* says of Burleigh's arrangement of Negro Folk songs:

There are nights when overhead rises a star-set dome, a gem encrusted surface, and there are other nights when the stars lie deeper, when the blue-black distances between are deep as night itself. The simple versions of these spirituals are charged with religious ecstasy, but it is shallow, as ephemeral as an April shower, while the arrangements under discussion attain a solidity that causes us to suspect that in them the Negro voices a religious security as old as creation. Older than hope, deeper than grief, more tender than tears, more substantial than eternity—the utterance of a race unshaken in faith though subjected to earth's vilest torments. The depth which has been added to these songs is a universal quality which may remove them from the Negro as his peculiar property, and give them to the world at large.

Mr. Burleigh has preserved them in harmonies that belong to modern methods of tonal progression, but these progressions have not pressed out of the melodies their racial flavor. The wild grape has been transformed into a delicious wine.

Finally, Max Endicoff tells of a mid-night pilgrimage to a New Jersey city in the *New York Call*:

A single spluttering gas flame spit a spiral wave of sooty smoke toward the low ceiling and shot a yellow circular wave into the darkness, thrusting deep shadows into the corners.

Up against the bar and alongside the walls a dozen Negroes, or more, lounged with that easy animal grace, so naturally inherent to them. They all maintained a strange quietude, with only an occasional sibilant whisper tearing through the silence like a streak of lightning across black skies. All eyes were centered attentively on a young buck and a wench, in close embrace, going through a rhythmic dance interpretation of the hiccupping music that stuttered from a chronically asthmatic player-piano. But what was this music on the cylindrical roll, with its queer hieroglyphic excisions? Was it a popular dance tune, a rag-time melody, a jazz strain or a tuneful hymn? Oh, no. It was nothing less than the prelude and *liebestod* from Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde."

And it was to this intense, surging and tumultuous cry of love passion that the two young Negroes pirouetted with an inconceivably imaginative conception of appropriate movement of the limbs. Considering the rhythmless character of the music (from a terpsichorean point of view) the performance was amazing for its audaciousness and precocity. And equally astounding was the cool, nonchalant attitude of the onlookers, who critically studied

each movement of the dancers and quietly commented upon them among themselves.

The Negro is finding an opening door in the field of dramatic art. This is as it should be—for true art knows no color line. Three groups of Negro players who have appeared on the New York stage during the past two years have given evidence of that fact.

The Lafayette Players, composed entirely of Negro actors, have played in a house located in the distinct Negro district of New York City and patronized largely by Negro theatre-goers.

The Negro Players, composed entirely of Negro actors, have played Ridgely Torrence's works in two houses located in the distinct theatre district of New York City and patronized largely by white theatre-goers.

A third group of Negro actors presents a different phase of this interesting field of art. This season has brought to New York the beautiful and colorful "Chu Chin Chow," a musical tale of the East, in which thirty and more Negro actors work along, side by side and in pleasing harmony, with their upwards of two hundred co-workers of various races—a veritable assemblage of peoples of both hemispheres. These Negro actors take well their parts—from the small brown-faced smiling lad of eight, who disports himself in his Eastern habiliments while carrying the weighty bags of treasure, to the overgrown and loud-mouthed "Son of the Bean Seller in the Streets of Ancient Bagdad." But way and above and beyond her kinsmen and distinctly one of the outstanding characters of the entire cast stood Matty Thomas, who, until her recent and unexpected and lamentable death, took the part of "Bostan, the half-witted servant whose dialect no one understands but her mistress."

The *New York Times* said:

The serving woman in Ali Baba's house speaks only in some uncouth and unintelligible jargon, but with an expression so characteristic, so eloquent, that one seems to understand and rejoices that such evil is not conveyed in words.

The *New York Evening World* commented thus:

The work of the young Negro girl, Matty Thomas, who plays the rôle of Bostan, the half-witted servant of Mahbah, shows skilful training. This girl was among a score or more who answered an advertisement for "supers" for "Chu Chin Chow." Mr. Swete picked her from the mob, and she made good. She speaks nothing but a jumble of Arabian words taught her by Mr. Swete. But even funnier than her performance is the fact that she was a Tenth Avenue laundress before she worked her way to the stage, a Madam Sans Gene, as it were, with a touch of color.

It is Matty Thomas whom *THE CRISIS* presents as a cover page to its readers.