



Keystone View Co.

## COLORED CAVALRY TROOPS REVIEWED BY GENERAL PERSHING

smithing, harness repairing, horseshoeing and carpentry work. The Nichburg cooperative workshop reported the estimated value of work done by members last year as \$355, including cash repairing done for non-members amounting to \$150.

☐ At the Lafayette-Marne Day Celebration at West Point Military Academy, colored cavalry troops were reviewed by General John J. Pershing. Other prominent military and naval officials also took part in the ceremonies.

☐ On the 5th and 6th of April there will be held in Baltimore the Spring Conference of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History directed by Dr. C. G. Woodson. The program will cover two days and will offer an opportunity for the discussion of every phase of Negro life and history. All persons having documentary knowledge of phases of Negro History prior to the Civil War and during the Reconstruction period are asked to attend this Conference to devise plans for a more successful prosecution of this particular work. Another concern of the Conference will be to stimulate interest in the collection of Negro folklore for which there is offered a prize of \$200 for the best collection of

tales, riddles, proverbs, sayings and songs, which have been heard in Negro homes. This special work is under the supervision of a committee composed of Dr. Elsie Clews Parsons, Assistant Editor of the *Journal of American Folklore*, Dr. Franz Boas, Professor of Anthropology in Columbia University and Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

☐ Alpha Beta Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority announces a prize essay and short story contest open to the High School girls of greater New York. The essay shall not exceed 1500 words, and must be on either of the following subjects:

1. American Negro in the Fine Arts.
2. Contributions of Negro Women to Racial Progress.

The short story must have a background of either racial or local life, and must not exceed 3000 words. All papers must be neatly written in ink or typed, on one side of the paper only. Manuscripts may be mailed at any time before May 10th, 1923, to Miss Jessie Fauset, THE CRISIS, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City. A prize of \$10 in gold will be awarded the author of the best essay and the same amount to the writer of the best short story.

## SEMI-PEONAGE IN PANAMA



G. VICTOR COOLS



THE Panama Canal is a phenomenal success. As an engineering feat it far surpasses anything of this kind ever undertaken by man. One cannot describe adequately this gigantic structure. To be able to appreciate its immensity, as a product of the human mind, one must visit the Panama Canal Zone. No other achievement of modern times so forcefully attests the genius of the American people. And yet were it not for the sturdy black men of the West Indies there would be no Panama Canal. This supreme engineering accomplishment should be regarded as a monument to the intellect of the American engineers, and to the physical prowess and mental alertness of the West Indian blacks. It was they who made possible the construction of the canal.

When the first group of American engineers landed in Panama in 1904, they found there a nucleus of efficient black men—artisans and laborers—who were originally identified with the French Canal Company. A number of these men occupied positions of trust in the office personnel of the company, while in the field of construction they held positions ranging from superintendent of construction to skilled mechanics and shopmen. The usefulness of these men was immediately recognized by these American pioneers, consequently, they were allowed to serve in their various capacities. They worked side by side with the black men in their offices, shops, and in the field of construction. No resentment was felt by them. Perhaps it was because they came from New England and other northern states.

The white men who came later supplemented rather than supplanted the colored workers. With this force of blacks, along with those who came later both as imported and independent immigrants, the deadly malaria and yellow fevers were successfully combatted and put under control. It was not until this perilous task had been accomplished that the product of Southern chivalry came. This incident reminds the writer of a similar situation. When the

United States declared war against the Central Powers and called for volunteers, the flower of New England manhood rushed to defend the Nation's flag, but nothing was seen of the chivalrous Southern youths until the selective draft forced them to come forward.

The Southerners came when the dangers were over. They came by the hundred, then by the thousand. Panama was a new El Dorado. Wages were high, and the only expense which they had to bear was that incident to board, and they got that at reduced rates. Furnished houses, fuel, transportation, amusements, janitor's service, everything was furnished them free. Panama was indeed a gold mine. At first these Southerners were quiet. No objection was raised to the presence of the black men. It was not that they approved it. The fact is, they were too weak to protest. It must be remembered that some of them came without even a change of linen. They were not long in showing their fangs, these southern snakes. When they had fed and clothed themselves and had become strong, they began to growl. The canal authorities felt that they had to be placated. And so the black men who were in the most important positions were surreptitiously removed. Those whose places could not be conveniently filled were retained. The artisans and shopmen were given another designation. From skilled mechanics they came to be known as helpers. As helpers they did the work while the men they were supposed to help looked on.

In the meantime the sinister influence of the Southern gentlemen was manifesting itself in another direction. Suddenly they felt that the black men were not reliable. To supply themselves with reliable laborers they imported first, Russian, and, later, laborers from southern Europe. These, however, proved to be less responsible than the blacks. They were not physically able to withstand the harsh climate. Those who survived became unmanageable. Grudgingly they acknowledged their mistakes and,