

HERE TO YONDER

By **LANGSTON HUGHES**

Books Are Friends

BOOKS MAKE very good Christmas presents. Especially for people doing their last minute Christmas shopping, books are easy to select; the bookshops will mail them for you, and books are presents that always have tone, class, taste—providing you choose good books.

Many people nowadays are forming Negro libraries, or adding to their Negro collection of books. A volume by a contemporary Negro author would be, in most homes, a welcome Christmas gift. In homes where there are students or young people, a book like "The Negro Caravan," an excellent anthology of Negro writings



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from way back up to now, containing stories, poems, autobiographies, and useful and compact notes on the authors represented, is a fine present. For persons interested in art, the Alain Locke book of Negro art, with its beautiful illustrations, or the James A. Porter's "Modern Negro Art," make delightful presents at Yuletide.

Negro History

TWO NEW BOOKS this fall by white persons about Negroes that I highly recommend as gifts are Edwin R. Embree's "Brown Americans" and Earl Conrad's "Harriet Tubman." These are particularly good for Negro history fans. "Brown Americans" is simply and beautifully written and contains many interesting facts not easy to come by elsewhere. For instance it tells about the black sailors under Commodore Perry in 1812, who made up one-sixth of his fighting force.

HARRIET TUBMAN retells in detail the ever-thrilling story of that great colored woman of slave days, with complete facts and documentation. It is a wonderful book for parents to give to children whom they are seeking to inspire to leadership. Negro parents must more and more put before their young the great stories of struggle out of the Negro past when times were harder by far than they are now. Such stories will serve to offset the despair that rises in the hearts of youth today when they come up against the current color-line.

To read about Harriet Tubman who broke her own shackles of slavery and risked her life many times to liberate others, is to put to shame those who say now that they can do nothing because of color and Jim Crow. Harriet Tubman was a slave. But did she stay a slave? She did not! Or was she content merely to free herself? She was not. Her story is a great American story. Give it to your kids for Christmas.

"The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass" is another thrilling true story for the Christmas stocking of a high school or college boy or girl. (Or for anybody who doesn't own it; for that matter.) A year or two ago, it was published in a new edition.

The Chinese People

GETTING AWAY from books by or about ourselves for a moment, this fall a great book about the struggles of the Chinese peoples for independence and freedom has appeared. It is called, "Battle Hymn of China," and is by a white woman who has spent most of her life engaged in the liberation struggles of the Indian and Chinese people. Her name is Agnes Smedley. She has recently come back to this country from China, where she passed twelve years with the Chinese armies as a correspondent and medical worker among them.

Should Agnes Smedley be lecturing in your community this season, be sure to go hear her, and go up to the platform and shake her hand afterwards, for she, like that other American woman back from the far East, Pearl Buck, is a great friend of dark peoples everywhere. If you hear Miss Smedley speak, you will almost certainly want to buy her book which tells in full of the vast marches of the Chinese armies into the interior, and of the heroic defense of their land that these colored peoples of the Orient are making against fascist invaders. If you cannot hear and see Miss Smedley, "Battle Hymn of China" will give you the flavor of her forceful personality and of her deep love for the poor and oppressed and battle-ridden of the world.

American colored people should know about the other colored peoples of the earth, Indians, Chinese, Africans, Malaysians. When our boys come home from the war in the Pacific, they will know more. Those of us who stay at home, can learn only through books. Beneath that Christmas tree then, put a book, or several books—Lin Yu Tang's, Pearl Buck's, Agnes Smedley's, or Nehru's great autobiography.

In that way you will be helping Santa Claus bring about greater sympathy and understanding among ourselves of the problems and courage of other peoples half-way across the world who are the same colors as ourselves — yellow, brown, and black.

The Orientals read about us, and are interested in us. I have received reviews of my own books from newspapers in India, China, Java. My novel, "Not Without Laughter," was published in China in Chinese. The books of other American Negro writers, too, have been published in the Orient. Books help people to become friends, even though they never meet. Christmas is a good time to increase that friendship by giving books for presents.