

THE BOOKSHELF

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A Document of a Woman's Heart

"An Autumn Love Cycle," by Georgia Douglas Johnson. Harold Vinat, New York.

By BLANCHE WATSON

Alain Locke says of Georgia Douglas Johnson's "An Autumn Love Cycle," that in her first volume entitled, "The Heart of a Woman," the singer has chosen with singular felicity her special domain of art, and that in this volume—her third—she proceeds with maturing power and courage of expression further to document the woman heart. Dr. Locke believes that the emotions of women have yet to be carried beyond the platitudes and sentimentalizations of man-made tradition to fuller and freer expression. "Voicing this yearning of woman for candid self-expression," he goes on, "Mrs. Johnson invades the province where convention has been most tyrannous and inveterate—the experiences of love, and . . . in a simple declarative style, endures with ingenuous directness and means and emotions of her themes."

Mrs. Johnson is a lyricist, delicate in touch, gloriously rhythmic, with a gift—or blessing—of ever choosing the right word, that well might arouse envy in anyone who aspires to become a fine craftsman in the noble art of literature. What, for instance, could be more perfect than the second stanza of "Thralldom," in reality a marvelous characterization of human personality:

*Your presence bounds my every way
And thrills me in its fold
With phantom hands, that hold
Like cherished chains of gold.*

In addition to her fine technique, the poet is engagingly candid, sincere, spontaneous, elemental. She has a fine and never failing good taste. If one may be permitted the term, conveying the impression, the while, that she has said exactly what she set out to say, and all she wanted to say. And when one engaged in chronicling the experiences of love explores the depths of the powerful human instincts and urges that beckon so alluringly and drive so relentlessly, this is no small need of praise.

One who has glimpsed all the manifestations of love, from its "vibrant day" to its "ancient tomb," cannot fail to hold her audience, cannot but stir each and every heart and find the depths of the holy of hollen hidden therein. Many can say with her:

*Through you I entered heaven and hell,
Knew rapture and despair,
I flitted o'er the plains of earth
And scaled each shining stair;
Drank deep the waters of content
And drained the cup of gall;
'Twas regal and 'twas impotent,
'Twas supreme and thral.*

But only the favored few can "sift across the backway way" and declare triumphantly:

*For every glancing, golden gleam
I offer gladly—pain;
And I would give a thousand worlds
To live it all again!*

Georgia Douglas Johnson can do this.

"The Autumn Love Cycle" is de-

lightfully gotten up. Robert S. Joseph has done himself proud, and the Vail-Ballou Press has cause to be proud of the little book so perfect in all its details. The cover even shows the lovely, softened tints of the fall of the year. Miss News-holme's frontispiece is thoughtful and beautiful. The titles of the poems are intriguing, the arrangement of them excellent. There are not too many of them and not too few. It is altogether a soul-satisfying book, and one that should be in every library, with a space on one side for "Bronze" and "The Heart of a Woman" (by the same author), and room on the other for a fourth volume which one feels sure must come.