

**THE DESERT.** By John C. Van Dyke. Illustrated from photographs by J. Smeaton Chase. Scribner; \$2.

The addition of photographic illustrations to the new edition of Van Dyke's notable work on the American desert calls for another word of praise. To visualize the desert one must either see it, or see many pictures of it combined with an inspired description. Chase's photographs and Van Dyke's paragraphs reveal the desert almost as it is. Those who have seen it—who have shriveled and thirsted in its burning heat, who have climbed its naked mountains, who have known its luscious color—have in this book a more intimate interpreter of its vagaries. It re-creates the great arid stretches of the Southwest pictorially, poetically, and scientifically—such a satisfying and altogether delightful blend as one seldom meets in an authoritative work. The fact that, after seventeen years in print, the subject matter is still fresh is evidence of something more than the changeless quality of the desert.

**THE HIVE.** By Will Levington Comfort. Doran; \$1.50.

This book arouses more curiosity than it satisfies. It is formless, yet alive with an eager tenseness that makes you wonder how a mind with so many ideas on the adventure that is life can elude any plan or design. Mr. Comfort has much to say about the New Race and Democracy and Art and the Path of Life; but he somehow manages to escape most of the platitudes that you have heard before. Through his discursiveness you get glimpses of a remarkable school-community on the shores of Lake Erie, where children and teachers pursued the quest of life together and gained much wisdom and poetical receptivity. Later they are all somehow in or about to be in California, living a life of austere paganism in that divine climate by the sea. The book is dotted with the letters and compositions of the children, some of whom are at college or out in the world. Either Mr. Comfort has hypnotized them into his style and ideas, or he has truly a new race of seven-year-olds. The profundity of their imagination and poetic feeling strains your credulity to the breaking point. Why does he not tell us how such amazing children are produced? There is an exhilarating taste of a new civilization of glorious youths and girls bathed in the sun and air of Greek-like California, living a life of sensuous austerity and wisdom and comradeship. The philosophy is not at all of the Western world, but is a vague yet appealing mysticism, with the Path of Life, and discipleship, and spiritual growth restored as the divine satisfactions of the soul. Is Mr. Comfort the forerunner of a Californian mysticism which has con-

quered jargon and cant and has really assimilated the East for the working out of the "good life"? His book is striking enough to make you want to track his ideas and implications down to the hive—to see whether the honey there is real.

**THE NEGRO IN LITERATURE AND ART.**  
By Benjamin Brawley. Duffield; \$1.35.

In his preface the author promises to describe the achievement of the Negro in the United States measured "by absolute rather than by partial or limited standards," meaning, one may infer, that the criteria are to be found in the history of arts and letters itself rather than in racial estimates. The purpose appeals to those who share in the hope of the author that "some day the Negro will cease to be a problem and become a human being." Unfortunately the purpose fails of fulfillment. Such expressions as "the grand epic of the race," "foremost composer of the race," "foremost man of the race in pure literature," "the longest poem yet written by a Negro in America," jerk back into the old confines of racial comparison the refugee from the racial point of view. We are invited to consider not the work of artists who happen to be Negroes, but the work of Negroes who happen to be artists. Nor is there much appreciation shown of the work of Negroes in so far as they are, not successes, but artists. The book is a catalogue of pictures, books, statues, songs, and so on, and a listing of prizes and honorable mentions rather than a study of contributions to art and literature. In this Who's Who the particular mention is accorded to: Phillis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles W. Chestnutt, W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, William Stanley Braithwaite, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Henry O. Tanner, and Meta Warlick Fuller.

**USE YOUR GOVERNMENT.** By Alissa Franc. Dutton; \$2.

As early as 1839 Congress appropriated \$1000 "for the purpose of collecting and distributing seeds, prosecuting agricultural investigations, and procuring agricultural statistics." The Department of Agriculture has since extended the scope of its activities so consistently that it is now expending an appropriation of upwards of \$7,000,000 annually and employing in the neighborhood of 20,000 workers. Perhaps no other single factor, through the years of peace, has been more potent than this in keeping alive the national spirit. "Use Your Government" is an exposition of what the national government, through its various departments, is accomplishing in promoting activities for the well-being of its citizens. The case of the farmer, where by far the most notable success has been achieved, is taken up in detail, from the planting and growing of crops to the development

of coöperative selling plans. Other chapters are devoted to national aid extended to the would-be settler, the man in business, the working man, the Negro, the woman in the home, to boys and girls, and (chapters of too scant achievement) to the immigrant. Miss Franc's book would be of more practical worth to the average citizen if it were accompanied by a chart, or series of charts, enumerating the various bureaus of governmental activity and the character of aid and information which each has at its disposal. The lack of this impairs its accessibility as a work of ready reference, but the volume is adapted admirably for use by teachers of civics in American schools.