

A Rare Person—A Poignant Experience . . . The true story of a remarkable negro servant woman, told in her own words to an understanding writer

Willie Mae

by Elizabeth Kytte

Alfred A. Knopf, 1958. Pp. 244. \$3.50



ELIZABETH KYTLE (Mrs. Calvin Kytte of Columbus) lived in Georgia until 1950 when her husband's business brought her to Columbus. This is her first book. It will also be published in England.

Willie Mae is a Negro woman, now in her fifties who, as this amusing and poignant personal memoir opens, is "packing up every Lord's thing I own fixing to leave Georgia for good and all."

"It always has been a hard row to hoe for colored folks", she says, "but now Herman Talmadge has done got himself elected governor, it's the frying pan *and* the fire. One while here I thought things might could get getter, but now I know different, I'm solidly fed up.

"I don't want nothing belongs to white folks. But I've got a plumb bellyfull of the biggest portion of them treating us the way they do. . . ."

And the book ends with Willie Mae

Reviewed by *Ernest Cady*, a native of Newark, who has lived in Columbus most of his life. He is Literary Editor and editorial writer on the *Columbus Dispatch*. He wrote *WE ADOPTED THREE*, and, with his wife, is co-author of *HOW TO ADOPT A CHILD*.

changing her mind in these words — "I reckon even two Talmadges don't make a Georgia. This here Georgia's my home place too, and I ain't going to run out of it like a tuck-tail dog!"

In the intervening pages, Willie Mae (through her amanuensis, Mrs. Kytte) conversationally relates the story of her life, with plenty of self-criticism as well as barbs—blunt, matter of fact and subtle—at the social system under which she lived for a half century.

With a mastery of the simple declarative sentence which many an educated writer might envy; with quaint turns of vivid colloquial speech little-known to whites; with a retentive memory implementing a keen, observant eye, she has produced a Negro's-eye view of Deep South living that may properly be called unique.

Poverty, and hard work, and making-do with little; enjoying to the full the scanty

privileges and pleasures that came her way; lavishing affection on those she cared for and meeting suffering and tragedy with patient acceptance—this was the day-by-day tenor of Willie Mae's existence.

Willie Mae herself is no propagandist like some well-known Negro writers who have published autobiographies. Whenever this note creeps in, as in a bit of rather lyrical praise for federalized housing and a not-too-credible meeting with Franklin D. Roosevelt as a guest in a house where Willie Mae was working, the reader senses that another hand may have been at work.

In this, her first book, Mrs. Kytte has done a skilled job of getting inside another person's mind and interpreting what she found there with fidelity and charm. Granting that the material was there, craftsmanship of a high order was necessary to mold it into a successful story.



MORE LIGHT ON PREHISTORIC OHIOANS

THE ADENA PEOPLE—NO. 2, by William S. Webb and Raymond S. Baby, with chapters by Charles E. Snow and Robert M. Goslin. Published for The Ohio Historical Society by *The Ohio State University Press*. 1957. Pp. xii + 123. Illus. \$3.00.

Raymond S. Baby, Curator of Archaeology, Ohio Historical Society, is a native of Cleveland and a resident of Worthington.

William S. Webb is Chairman Emeritus, Department of Anthropology and Physics, University of Kentucky.

THE ADENA PEOPLE—NO. 2, the second publication of the recently established Ohio State University Press, is a scholarly addition to the known data on the prehistoric Adena Indians of the Ohio Valley. Forty-nine new sites have been examined since 1945 and there has been a re-examination of earlier excavations and materials. Twenty-five new traits of these Indians have been discovered, among them the kinds of pipes used; grooved axes; burning over earth-covered burials or tombs, etc.