

**THE HEART OF A
WOMAN, AND
OTHER POEMS**

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The Heart of a Woman, and Other Poems by Georgia Douglas Johnson & William Stanley Braithwaite

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GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON & WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE

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BY
GEORGIA DOUGLAS JOHNSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE



BOSTON
THE CORNHILL COMPANY
1918

TO
H. E. Johnson

INTRODUCTION

The poems in this book are intensely feminine and for me this means more than anything else that they are deeply human. We are yet scarcely aware, in spite of our boasted twentieth-century progress, of what lies deeply hidden, of mystery and passion, of domestic love and joy and sorrow, of romantic visions and practical ambitions, in the heart of a woman. The emancipation of woman is yet to be wholly accomplished; though woman has stamped her image on every age of the world's history, and in the heart of almost every man since time began, it is only a little over half of a century since she has either spoke or acted with a sense of freedom. During this time she has made little more than a start to catch up with man in the wonderful things he has to his credit; and yet all that man has to his credit would scarcely have been achieved except for the devotion and love and inspiring comradeship of woman.

Here, then, is lifted the veil, in these poignant songs and lyrics. To look upon what is revealed is to give one a sense of infinite sympathy; to make one kneel in

spirit to the marvelous patience, the wonderful endurance, the persistent faith, which are hidden in this nature.

The heart of a woman falls back with the night,
And enters some alien cage in its plight,
And tries to forget it has dreamed of the stars
While it breaks, breaks, breaks on the sheltering bars.

sings the poet. And

The songs of the singer
Are tones that repeat
The cry of the heart
Till it ceases to beat.

This verse just quoted is from "The Dreams of the Dreamer," and with the previous quotation tells us that this woman's heart is keyed in the plaintive, knows the sorrowful agents of life and experience which knock and enter at the door of dreams. But women have made the saddest songs of the world, Sappho no less than Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Ruth the Moabite poetess gleaning in the fields of Boaz no less than Amy Levy, the Jewess who broke her heart against the London pavements; and no less does sadness echo its tender and appealing sigh in these songs and lyrics of Georgia Douglas Johnson.

But sadness is a kind of felicity with woman, paradoxical as it may seem; and it is so because through this inexplicable felicity *they* touched, intuitionally caress, reality.

So here engaging life at its most reserved sources, whether the form or substance through which it articulates be nature, or the seasons, touch of hands or lips, love, desire, or any of the emotional abstractions which sweep like fire or wind or cooling water through the blood, Mrs. Johnson creates just that reality of woman's heart and experience with astonishing raptures. It is a kind of privilege to know so much about the secrets of woman's nature, a privilege all the more to be cherished when given, as in these poems, with such exquisite utterance, with such a lyric sensibility.

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE.

Cambridge, Massachusetts.

