

"nobody" knew—meeting on common ground. The movement behind it doubtless means something to the race problem in general; certainly it means something to American literature. The African, with his love of color, warmth, rhythm and the whole sensuous life, might, if emotionally liberated, do interesting things to a "Nordic" stock, so bustling and busy, so preoccupied with "doing things" in the external world, as almost to forget, sometimes, that it has any senses. And it would be one of fate's quaint but by no means impossible revenges if the Negro's real contribution to American life should be in the field of art.

### A Negro Renaissance

The dinner given a few nights ago in honor of the prize winners in the literary contest, conducted by the Negro magazine "Opportunity" was only a somewhat more conclusive indication of a phenomenon of which there have been many symptoms—of the fact that the American Negro is finding his artistic voice and that we are on the edge, if not already in the midst, of what might not improperly be called a Negro renaissance.

Negro actors appear in serious dramas, like "The Emperor Jones" and "All God's Chillun Got Wings." A Negro tenor, singing with equal ease, apparently, in his native "spirituals," or the most polished French, gathers a white audience that packs Carnegie Hall from pit to dome. Greenwich Village is quite *démodé* by the Negro cabarets of Harlem, and the average New Yorker (if there is such a bird!) suddenly discovers that in that part of his town a new Negro city, with theaters and restaurants, doctors, lawyers, merchants, priests, has sprung up; so to say, over night. "The Survey Graphic," a magazine devoted to the consideration of significant social phenomena, gives a whole issue to this new Negro metropolis, described as the Mecca of the "new Negro." People read poems in white magazines by one Countée Cullen, and little dream that the writer—who decidedly seems to "have it in him"—is a Negro undergraduate in a New York university.

The significant thing in all this, at any rate in that part of it represented by the dinner of the other night, is not that people with more or less Negro blood can write—Dumas was the grandson of a Negro—but that these American Negroes are expressing for the most part essentially Negro feelings and standing squarely on their racial inheritance. The prize winning poem—the judges of the contest were well known critics and professors of English—was called "The Weary Blues." The clash in the prize play was between an "old" Negro, quite willing to be subservient to the white owner of his little farm, even to sacrificing his daughter, and the new generation represented by the educated daughter and her Negro school-teacher lover. Some of the titles of stories submitted were "The Voodoo's Revenge," "A Soul Goes West on the B. and O.," "Color Struck," "Black Death," "A Florida Sunday," "The Boll Weevil Starts North," "Cat and the Saxophone."

These young people—and youth was another striking thing about this gathering—were not trying to imitate the white man, nor repeating the professional white story-teller's dreary stencils of the "darkey." They were expressing their own feelings, frankly and unabashed, even if it took them back to the jungle. When rain threshes on the roofs of their Harlem flats they do not try to imagine what Wordsworth might have said about it. They stuff their fingers in their ears to shut out the sudden maddening memory of the sound of rain on banana leaves, of dances in the moonlight, and the tom-toms throbbing through the breathless tropic night!

A novel sight, that dinner—white critics, whom "everybody" knows, Negro writers, whom