

NEW NEGRO VIVIDLY DEPICTED IN ST. PAUL'S GUILD PRESENTATION

With their presentation of S. Randolph Edmonds' tragedy of slave life, "Breeders" at the St. Paul's Parish Hall on Dec. 3, the St. Paul's Theatre Guild will introduce a new type of Negro drama to the Atlanta play-going public.

Much criticism has been heaped upon little theatre groups of color which essay plays with the peasant dialect as a medium because the characters portrayed are such puerile, weak and unheroic creatures that any individual with a touch of race pride revolts at their very presentation.

The reason for this is obvious. Most of the plays of Negro life available were those by white authors; writers who were undoubtedly sincere and sympathetic, but white, a fault which they themselves were powerless to overcome and one which unconsciously projected itself into their creations. White authors, regardless of how sympathetic they might wish to be, could not or at least did not make heroes out of the black puppets in their plays. Their characters were characters of surrender: just as Emperor Jones was a surrenderer; just as Jed in "Hallelujah" was a murderer.

S. Randolph Edmonds has merely substituted the spirit of the conquerer for that of the defeated. The conquering spirit is manifest in his "Breeders." It is not confined to overcoming physical adversaries. It is the soul of the black peasants that Edmonds exalts.

In "Breeders" a mere slip of a slave girl, rather than be given

over to a moronistic giant to breed robust offspring for the benefit of her owner, takes the heroic way out. She answers the order of her white overseer's demands with eternal defiance. The play, a tragedy ending apparently in subservience to the insurmountable forces of hatred and prejudice, shows in that very subservience a conquering soul in a lofty sweep of idealism.

Mr. Edmonds' play lifts the colored peasant drama out of the depths and places it on a heroic plane. James D. Browne of Atlanta University, a former student of Mr. Edmonds, is directing the play. The tragically heroic role of Ruth is beautifully portrayed by Miss Eleanor Blackshear. John Long, Queen Esther Heard, Leroy Haynes, and Reginald Patrick complete the cast.

"Breeders" is one of the three plays to be presented by the group in the newly equipped little theatre of the St. Paul's Parish Hall. Prominent in the casts of the other plays that constitute the bill are Mr. Raphael McIver whose standing portrayal of Agamemnon in the Atlanta University Players' recent production of "Daughters of Atrous" reestablished his position as Atlanta's first actor. Father H. J. C. Bowden, Miss Hazel Washington, Miss Louise Parks, Mr. Eugene McGowen, and Mr. George Finley. Mr. George Washington of Morehouse College is acting as business manager for the group. The sets for the plays are being designed and executed by Mr. Eugene Grigsby.