

off with the makings of a good plot which their authors failed to sustain; one possessed a strong, clearly developed plot, and the last, the prize-winner, was built around a plot slightly less strong, but so mingled with the elements of charm, and imagination that the members of the Committee, although they sent in their findings separately, gave it a unanimous first vote. Fifteen of the stories showed absolutely no play of imagination yet we are called an imaginative people. Where does the fault lie?

I have been a teacher so I am rather chary about placing the blame for the shortcomings of pupils on the members of the teaching profession. Yet in this case, since all the entrants were students, and probably representative, I should say that much of the blame must lie with the method of instruction. No matter how much a person desires to write he cannot write unless he has practice. And he cannot practice without models. One does not spring like Minerva from the head of Zeus, full-panoplied into the arena of authorship. Do our colored pupils read the great writers and stylists? Are they ever shown the prose of Shaw, Galsworthy, Mrs. Wharton, DuBois or Conrad, or that old master of exquisite phrase and imaginative incident—Walter Pater? Are they encouraged to develop a critical faculty? Does a teacher tell them this?—"Select a passage which appeals to you, find out why it appeals, and try to write a passage in the same style, but on another sub-

ject." Or: "Make up a story which is full of the real but the unusual." Or lastly: "Try to spin a yarn which is obviously unlikely, but none the less fascinating."

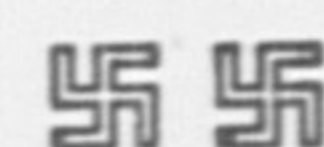
The first time this task is set before a pupil he will blench, and so will the teacher when he reads the results. But each successive set of results will be better. I know this. Of course this savors of the bare skeleton of preparation. It would seem to advocate writing by a formula. But all real writing is done that way—by a formula, by a fixed purpose which the writer holds in his brain, perhaps subconsciously, while he is perfecting his task. He wants his readers to feel sorrow, joy, amusement, despair and so he chooses his words, he dresses up his phrases, he picks his incidents to that end.

One's predilection for Writing, as one's predilection for Music or Painting is an inborn thing. One's success in Writing as in Music or Painting is a matter of conscious effort, of unwearying determination. The masterpieces are the compositions which have been worked at, thrown aside, picked up again, despaired over, cut and slashed and mended and sworn at. Until one day their creator finds they are good.

More than ever we need writers who will be able to express our needs, our thoughts, our fancies. The geniuses of course are born, but the shaping of most writers of talent lies in the hands of our teachers.

JESSIE FAUSET.

THE AFTER THOUGHT



WILLIS RICHARDSON



OH that last night I said I did not care,
But I was fretful from an angry sting;
And in my petulance was unaware
Of what great change a few hours' thought
would bring.

Now you are gone, my days are bleak and
long
And vacant as a sail-deserted sea;
Silent is my poor heart's divinest song,
Dead all those dreams of hope that lived
with me.

TO A WILD ROSE

A Prize Story



OTTIE B. GRAHAM



THIS story has been selected for the prize of fifty dollars offered by the Delta Omega Chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority "for the best short story written by a Negro student". The Committee of Award consisted of Arthur B. Spingarn, Jessie Fauset and W. E. B. DuBois. Their decision was unanimous.

Miss Graham was born in Virginia in 1900, educated in the public schools of Philadelphia and at Howard University, and is now an undergraduate at Columbia University, New York. She is the daughter of the Rev. W. F. Graham of Philadelphia.

The story awarded second place, also by unanimous decision, was submitted by John Howe of Lincoln University and will be published in a future number of THE CRISIS.



OTTIE BEATRICE GRAHAM

"O L' man, ol' man, why you looking at me so?" Tha's what you sayin', son. Tha's what you sayin'. Then you start a-singin' that song agin, an' I reckon I'm starin' agin. I'm just a wonderin', son. I'm just a-wonderin'. How is it you can sing them words to a tune an' still be wantin' for material for a tale? "Georgia Rose". An' you jus' sing the words an' they don't say nothin' to you? Well listen to me, young un, an' write what you hear if you want to. Don't laugh none at all if I hum while I tell it, 'cause maybe I'll forget all about you; but write what you hear if you want to.

Thar's just me in my family, an' I never did know the rest. On one o' them slave plantations 'way down in the South I was a boy. Wan't no slave very long, but know all about it jus' a same. 'Cause I was proud, they all pestered me with names. The white uns called me red nigger boy an' the black uns called me red pore white. I never 'membered no mother—just the mammies 'round the place, so I fought when I had to and kep' my head high without tryin' to explain what I didn't understand'.

Thar was a little girl 'round the house, a ladies' maid. Never was thar angel more heavenly. Flo they called her, an' they said

she was a young demon. An' they called her witch, an' said she was too proud. Said she was lak her mother. They said her mother come down from Oroonoka an' Oroonoka was the prince captured out o' Africa. England took the prince in the early days o' slavery, but I reckon we got some o' his kin. That mean we got some o' his pride, young un, that mean we got some o' his pride. Beautiful as was that creature, Flo, she could 'ford bein' proud. She was lak a tree—lak a tall, young tree, an' her skin was lak bronze, an' her hair lak coal. If you look in her eyes they was dreamin', an' if you look another time they was spaklin' lak black diamonds. Just made it occur to you how wonderful it is when somethin' can be so wild an' still so fine lak. "My blood is royal! My blood is African!" Tha's how she used to say. Tha's how her mother taught her. Oroonoka! African pride! Wild blood and fine.

Thar was a fight one day, one day when things was goin' peaceful. They sent down from the big house a great tray of bones from the chicken dinner. Bones for me! Bones for an extra treat! An' the men an' the women an' the girls an' the boys all come round in a ring to get the treat. The